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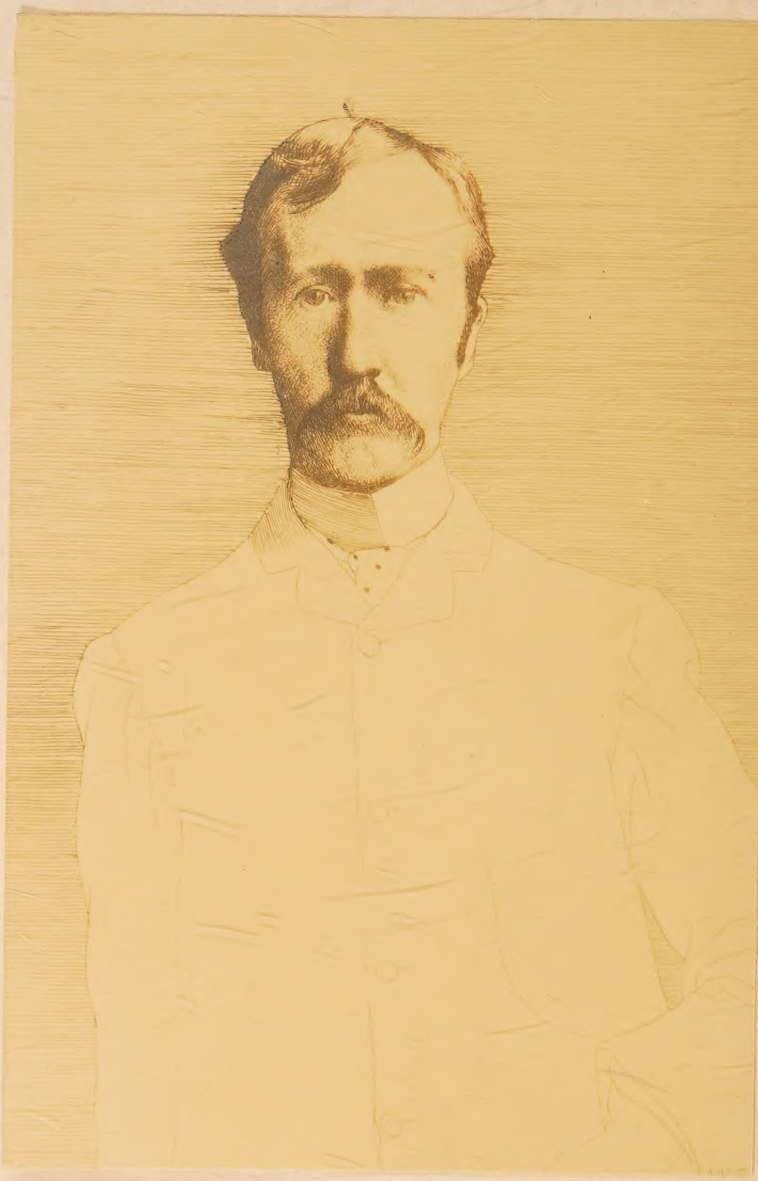
A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

Volume XIV

THE CARRA EDITION

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

GEORGE MOORE



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BY

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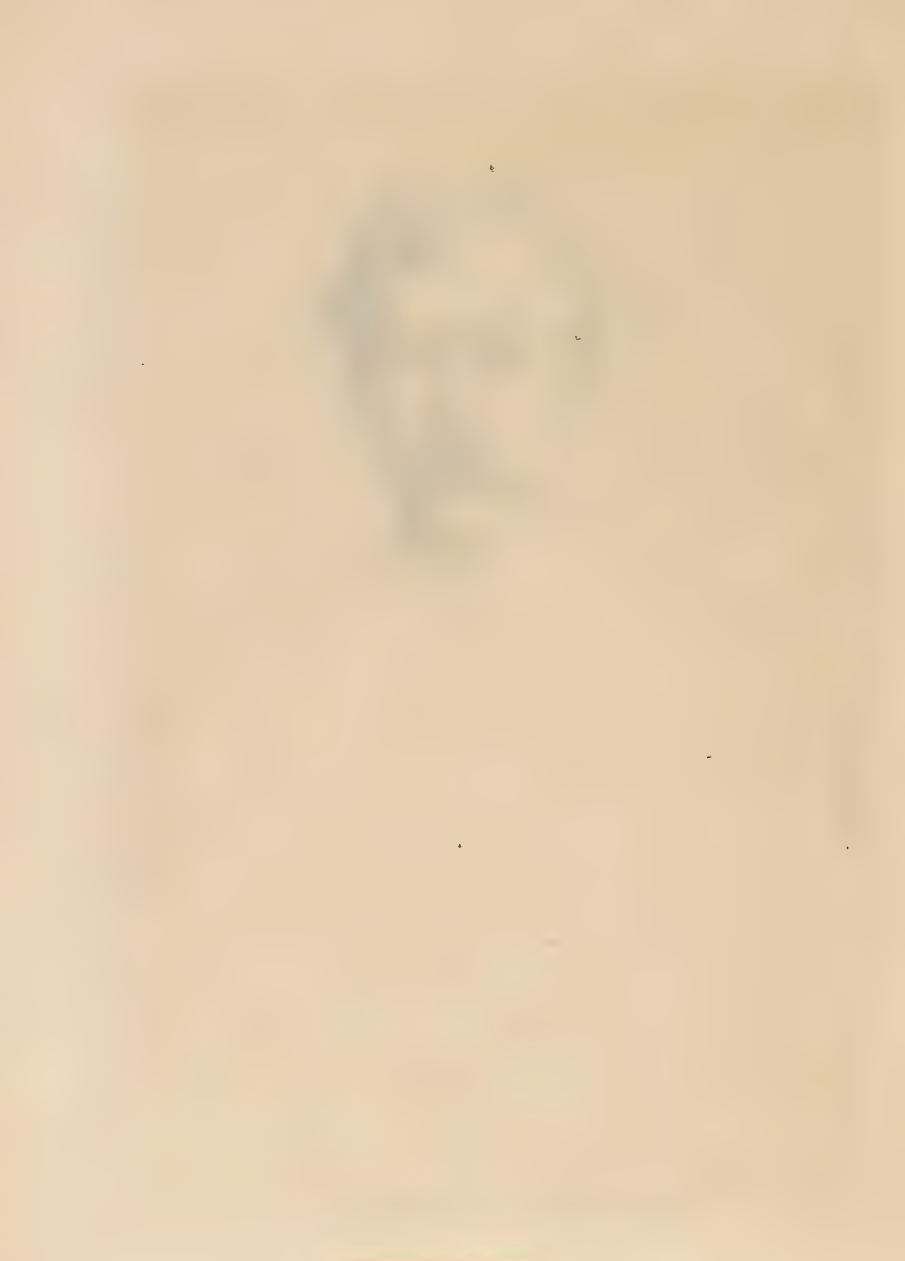
Game Edition



GEORGE MOORE

From an Etching by William Strang

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

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Carra Edition

PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY BY
BONI AND LIVERIGHT, INC., NEW YORK
1923

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

(Carra Edition)

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Printed in the United States of America

This edition consists of 1000 numbered sets of twenty-one volumes each. The first volume is numbered, and signed by the author.

A LEAVE-TAKING

A LEAVE-TAKING this certainly is to a great many readers, but I have faith in the good sense of all my readers, for they are not a heterogeneous crowd, but a family, and every one of the family knows how steadfast the persecution of my writings has been since the publication, forty years ago, of a little volume of poems entitled *Flowers of Passion.*

As I write I can hear a reader saying to himself as he paces his room: it is not two years since somebody pleaded at Bow Street that *The Brook Kerith* should be interdicted but the magistrate refused to issue the warrant; and last November in the Law Courts the jury, after having listened a whole day to a libel action, returned a verdict of no libel and no damages. But the fact that the magistrate refused to grant a warrant and the jury to convict is not sufficient compensation for the proffered insults, and our author has done well to retire into a literary arcanum where he will be able to practise his art in dignified privacy.

Another reader crosses his legs and meditates: George Moore was never welcome in Grub Street for he wished to write for men and women of letters, and this class is not recognised by the libraries as readers of books; strange that it should be so, but it is so; for whilst there are books for astronomers, for scientists, for doctors, for lawyers, for golfers, for cricketers, for chess players, for yachtsmen, and as for young girls in their teens, voluminous literature awaits them every year, there are no books written for men and women of letters exclusively. By private printing our author has cut himself off from many readers, but the alternative was for him to cease writing.

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

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CHAP. I.

THE Irish mail passes out of Euston Station with the easy movement of a deep, smooth river, or of a reptile gliding over soft grass, and the feeling of contentment and well-being, almost of happiness, produced by the vague rhythm of the train is augmented by the beauty of the fields and their hedgerows unfolding mile after mile under the languor of a June sunset. And all this while the traveller perceives the elms showing fine design on the fading day, rising out of the may with noble gesture, almost like sculpture, he murmurs, as he yields himself to admiration of the trees advancing and retiring, forming into groups at the corners of the fields and collecting into woods on the hill-sides. And no sooner have they collected themselves into woods, he says, than they disperse to gather themselves again into thickets, shaws and copses. Going to Ireland, he continues, is like travelling through a forest with clearings in it. The word forest, however, does not satisfy him; it is too evocative of wild and uncouth nature such as we have not here, he adds. A chase, perhaps, but even a chase conveys an idea of almost wild landscape, and this one is deliberately wooded; it is a well-ordered domain through which the train carries us like a smooth river. And the feeling of contentment and well-being, almost of happiness, that began to take possession of him soon after the train left London returns now exalted by what remains of the sunset; a faint flush

seen through grey clouds; a bygone sunset, the traveller remarks, taking pleasure in the words. We pursue the sunset, he mutters to himself, and, amused by the thought that himself and his fellow-travellers are raiders in pursuit of the sunset's gold, he begins to dream a romantic fable, and the paragraphs end so prettily in his dream that he thinks he has written the story, and experiences on arriving at Rugby some faint surprise when the newspaper boy does not offer to sell him a book entitled *Sunset's Gold*, with his name upon it—just published, sir.

The dreaming traveller is none other, O reader, than thy friend George Moore, come to entertain thee once more; and having robbed the sunset's gold, reader, we are now flying through the night, pursued by the Dawn, who would recover the gold robbed of her sister. Thou'lt forgive this attempt to entertain thee with a literary sequel as false as such things usually are, and thou shalt not be imposed upon. Between London and Rugby we did seem like travellers in pursuit of the sunset, but when the train rolled out of Rugby we became commonplace travellers on our way to Dublin, myself ashamed of my fable, at least of the second part of it, and glad to know that nobody need ever hear anything about it, not even my publisher.

The evening paper was opened, but it proved itself to be so eventless that I was compelled into a deep scrutiny of the man sitting opposite to me, but despite my study of him, he has passed out of my mind I fear for ever. All I can recall in present time is a tall man of rather common appearance, who spoke with a brogue and told me that he travelled for—— Again my memory is at fault, I cannot remember if he was in the dry goods or the whisky line, but am persuaded that our conversation began with: I hope, sir, we shall have a fine crossing.

Of course, I answered, we shall have a fine crossing, how can you doubt it? At which my fellow-traveller's

face became overcast, and after a pause he said: may I ask, sir, why you're sure we shall have a fine crossing? Because I am I, an alarm-provoking remark that I sought to quieten later, saying that having crossed the Irish Sea so many times without seeing anything like a wave I had come to regard the Irish Sea as waveless. Elsewhere there are waves, no doubt; we read of waves in the newspapers and in books, and my friends have spoken to me about waves, but so far as my own experience goes waves do not exist. And after all, I added, one must be guided by one's own experience rather than by what one reads and hears; isn't that so?

My fellow-traveller looked at me inquiringly, and as if dissatisfied with his examination of my face returned to his newspaper. But soon after I began to notice that he was watching me again over the rims of his spectacles, and like one who is unable to conquer his curiosity he said: I believe you when you say that the Irish Sea is always calm when you cross it, and that you have crossed it some hundreds of times, but will you tell me what conclusion you draw from the uninterrupted good luck which has attended you? I answered that I submitted the facts to him and that it was for him to draw conclusions, and he asked me if he would have my approval if he concluded from the facts before him that the sea did not wish to destroy me. On the contrary, I answered. The sea is kind to those whom it has selected to destroy. My life will end in the sea, but not necessarily in the Irish Sea. It is a relief, however, in a way to know what one's end will be. Have you never received tidings?

My fellow-traveller returned to his newspaper and it was some time before he made another remark. You believe then, sir, that life and death is determined at birth and that none can escape his fate? Before I can answer you I must ask if you're a Protestant or a Catholic. But it doesn't matter which, in either case you believe

that not a sparrow falls to the ground without it is His will. Isn't that so? He answered that he believed God to be all-knowing, and again returned to his paper. At Crewe, however, he laid it aside and poked his head out of the window. I think you're right, sir, we shall have a fine crossing. Didn't I tell you, sir, that there are no waves when I cross the Irish Channel? You're unbelieving and incredulous, yet you wear the credulous Catholic face.

As my fellow-traveller admitted himself to be a Catholic it seemed to me pleasing to relate that Protestantism and Catholicism were founded the same day at Antioch, and till the Menai Bridge interrupted my narrative, I made plain the differences that existed between Peter and Paul. But as no trace of the objections he raised to my theology between the Menai Tunnel and Holyhead is discoverable, however diligently I searched my memory, I presume that we wearied a little of each other during the journey across Anglesea; or else we became so absorbed by the beauty of the twilight that we forgot Peter and Paul, as excellent a thing to do as it is to remember them, for had it not been for Peter and Paul I might not have been able to abandon myself wholeheartedly to the beauty of the almost transparent veil that falls across the sky in June, dividing night from day by not more than two or three hours, and to the almost equal beauty of the twilit sea.

In another hour the first gulls will be flying around us, I said to myself, and sat with my eyes fixed on the east till I beheld bars of silver and a great phantom ship looming through the dusk. The night, I said, has begun to evaporate like a pale curl of blue smoke; it was not much more, I added, and dropped into dreams of the romance of sails rising, yard after yard, the top-gallant yard melting into clouds and the sails drawing the great ship charged with many destinies away, whither? Perhaps to end by the firing of a German torpedo. At

these words I felt for the tube whereby my life-belt was inflated, saying, and saying well: if we be torpedoed I have as good a chance to be saved as another, for as soon as the torpedo crashes into us I shall blow out the life-belt and shall be picked up in not less than an hour or two of immersion in the cool sea, somewhat exhausted but alive.

CHAP. II.

IT must have been soon after this pleasing thought that the gentleman in the dry goods or the whisky line who had travelled with me from Rugby took the seat beside me, and began: well, sir, as is usual the sea is waveless, and I answered him that if he wished it to be waveless when he returned he had better return with me. The suggestion seemed to appeal to him, but from a certain embarrassment in his manner I judged that he was minded to put a question.

Have you ever been for a long sea voyage? he asked, and I answered him that I had never been across the Atlantic, but that I had been six days out to sea from Marseilles to Port Said. And never seen a wave? he inquired. At most a slight swell, a wave implies a white crest, I replied, and seeing that he was not averse from hearing an account of my voyage I began to tell a dream that murmured in me ever since my father took me on his knee to tell me his travels. As far back as I can remember, I said, the Mediterranean has appeared always in my imagination as the bluest of seas and as the birthplace of all beautiful legends and stories. The bluest and beautifullest of seas, I said, hoping to cow my fellow-traveller with alliteration. But he was eager for some information regarding Marseilles, and I told him briefly of the strange white shore that we sailed past, chalk cliff or salt, ghostly shores, I said, on which nothing grows. A rabbit could not pick up a living, I inter-

jected. But weren't you curious to know if it was a promontory or an island that you sailed past? I had no mind for geographical details, I was thinking of Sicily, for it was in Sicily that rugged Polyphemus peering over some cliffs discerned Galatea in the foam, and it was on the Plain of Enna that Proserpine was raped while gathering flowers with her maidens; but none of my fellow-travellers could be persuaded to listen to these stories, and I swore that when I descended to the dusky halls where she sat beside Pluto I should not forget to bring her a bunch of asphodels to remind her of this world's beauty, almost forgotten by her. None, I continued, had a thought for these beautiful legends; they were interested to see a vulgar volcano eruptive on the horizon. I begged of them to remember that we should soon be passing the very place where Jupiter disguised in the form of a bull carried away Europa for his pleasure and for hers. But you, sir, are perhaps as indifferent to these stories as they, yet the garlanded bull, stemming the waves, Europa keeping her seat on one shoulder by the help of a horn, the sea nymphs singing hymns and throwing their tresses for joy in the air while Tritons blew conch shells, was a finer sight than a volcano. But, said my companion, you don't believe in these legends? Nobody knows what he believes, I replied, and nothing is certain but our attachment to the legends that represent our ideas and help us to live. Moreover do not all mythologies rely upon the union of divinity with the mortal; and does not Deity in all the mythologies take the form of some beast or bird? In one story the Deity is a bull, in another an eagle, in a third a dove, two women at least were trodden by birds. I looked into my companion's eyes and waited for an outburst. But he sat unmoved. Have I said anything that seems unreasonable to you? I asked. I'm thinking, he rejoined, that you'll not find many in Ireland that will appreciate the stories

you've been telling me. You're not going there preaching, are you? for if you are be advised by me and turn back. No, I answered, I'm not going to preach anything. Then you're going to Ireland to see the ruins? And I answered that I always took an interest in ruins wherever I might find them and that it was for its ruins that we all loved Ireland. And this remark led us straight into the Ulster question.

Without Ulster, my companion said, there can be no Home Rule, and I asked him if he could tell me why the Catholics were so anxious to get Ulster, and if he could explain how Ireland could be free if Ulster was to be coerced. My fellow-traveller stiffly repudiated any desire on the part of the Nationalist Party for help to coerce Ulster, and begged me to believe that the National Party only desired Ulster because Home Rule would be impossible without Ulster. Neither coercion nor cajolery, he cried; let them come in like men and help us to build a new Ireland. We became strenuous, and continued strenuous till I began to perceive we were missing the sunrise. The dawn is breaking, I said; tell me if you think there are tones as beautiful as those flower-like blues on any painter's palette, or a rose as pure as those little puffy clouds like Cupids. I agree with you, he replied; but without Ulster there can be no Home Rule; we must have a business head.

Let us not talk of Home Rule, but admire the morning sun. And now a word of advice: if Roman Catholics could think more of the sunrise and less about Ulster there might be a sunrise in Ireland. Look, I said, how the sun flashes above the horizon. You don't believe then, he asked, that through a rising tide of discontent Mr. Asquith will bring about a settlement? You'll have to define the word settlement before I can answer you, I said. Nothing is ever settled in this world. Everything is becoming. We can have no knowledge of any-

thing, for nothing in this world is permanent, unless talk. In Ireland talk is permanent and yet—— But I have no wish to criticise, I withdraw that last remark. And you'll do well to withdraw the remark you made about Mr. Asquith who visited a hospital and addressing himself to a wounded Sinn Feiner said: what do you think now of the rebellion? The wounded boy's answer was: well, I think it was a grand success. And why do you think that? was the unabashed Minister's next question. Well, sir, because you're here. You must admit that the Irish have not lost their wit? But are you sure that the boy's answer did not come out of an innocent heart? I inquired, and my fellow-traveller no doubt gave an answer, but it must have been a flat one else I should have remembered it, and bidding my fellow-traveller good-bye I said to myself: I'll consult the jarvey that drives me from the station.

What will content you? I asked.

Sure we don't want to be contented, he replied, and it seemed to me that he had, unwittingly, expressed a human feeling.

CHAP. III.

A FEW hours later the young doctor who supplies Dublin with jokes entertained me on the steps of the Shelbourne Inn with his views, telling me that it was the rebellion in Dublin that had given the English army a chance of redeeming its credit. In every other encounter it has come off second-best, he said, but in Dublin it can claim a victory, a plausible set-off for the defeat of Kut. He, too, represents another phase of the Irish mind, the one that sees a joke or an epigram in all circumstances, thereby contriving to survive an habitual discontent. But are there no ruins in Stephen's Green? I asked, and he told me the finest were to be seen in Sackville Street, adding, that the oven changes many an ugly carcass into

a sweet-smelting roast. The oven improves us all—houses as well as men and beasts, fishes and birds, and potatoes are better baked than boiled. Good-bye till dinner-time. And after dinner? I said, I will go to see the ruins; they will be looking their best after sunset, I interjected, catching something of my host's flippancy.

But dinner was prolonged with conversation until the moon rose, and then, remembering a phrase of Balzac's, "In the moonlight the Place de la Bourse is a dream of old Greece," I said to myself: ruins are best by moonlight. But my host continued to talk on many subjects till long after midnight, and the moon was waning and *The Irish Times* was printing when I reached the Liffey and saw the great skeleton façades lifting themselves up in the night.

Many of the buildings, the Imperial Hotel and the Post Office, appeared to first sight uninjured, but at second sight it was plain that they were but empty shells. I shall have, I said, to wait for the sunrise to see these ruins. At present they are but phantoms, a city that has passed away—shapeless mounds that might be of Babylon. I shall have to wait for another hour for some traces of Dublin to appear, ruined portico or broken column, which? But martial law still prevails, I continued, and arrest, though it lasts but a minute, is unpleasant. I will adjourn to the office of *The Irish Times* and write paragraphs till dawn; and though rubble heaps afford but slight pasture for the picturesque pen, it may be that I shall discover something. Nature is so various that I cannot fail to find something unexpected and significant if I search long enough. Even if the space in to-morrow's paper be filled he might like an article—on what? I asked myself. And in the hope that a subject would come into my mind while talking I went upstairs unabashed (the editors of Irish papers receive visitors while waiting for proofs), and it was not till one o'clock

that I began to notice that the editor began to weary of conversation. My proofs are late to-night, he said, but they cannot be long delayed; and the finest ruins are beyond Rutland Square. You might walk around that way; and his last advice to me was to look out for a building that had been shelled near Amiens Street Station.

Ten minutes' walk took me there. But how am I to describe picturesquely a wall twenty feet high by forty feet long with a hole in it? I asked myself, and returned to Henry Street wondering what the descriptive reporters attached to the newspapers had written about the ruins. They can describe anything, even a boat race, I said; it's their business. And it was while thinking about their art and Marius among the ruins of Carthage that I escaped as by a miracle from falling into a cellar in which I should certainly have died, discovered by my stench at the end of a week, and whoever found me would go back to the office of the *Times* with excellent copy. A lugubrious story truly of a reporter who died in a cellar in Henry Street, and one that soon changed to a story of a reporter who committed suicide amid the ruins because he could not describe them. Not being able to produce copy he became copy, I said, and I'm minded to follow his example, for have I not promised to write an article and up to the present I have discovered only a strip of wall-paper hanging from a ruined wall which I could have seen in London any day: pathetic, no doubt, but poor pasturage for the picturesque pen. All the same, the mantelpiece up above is a fine specimen; and with much literary sympathy I fell to examining a broken mantelpiece over which hung an overmantel, its mirror still intact and a piece of ornamental crockery and a little French clock still upon its shelves. Here is my symbol, I said, somewhat commonplace, but the best I shall find. A pleasant home, no doubt it once was, and in my imagination I saw a family collected

round the fender after the evening meal, mother reading a tale from a popular magazine to the children, the cat purring upon her knees. A somewhat commonplace subject for an article, I said, but one that will please the readers of *The Irish Times*. A plaintive "Miaw" reached me, and a beautiful black Persian cat appeared by the fireplace. A cat is almost articulate, and Tom asked me to explain to him the meaning of all this ruin. He has found his old fireplace, I said, and tried to entice him; but, though pleased to see me, he would not be persuaded to leave what remained of the hearth on which he had spent so many pleasant hours, and pondering on his faithfulness and his beauty I continued my search among the ruins, meeting cats everywhere, all seeking their lost homes among the ashes and all unable to comprehend the misfortune that had befallen them. It is true that the cats suffer vaguely, but suffering is not less because it is vague, and it seemed to me that in the early ages of the world, shall we say twenty thousand years before Pompeii and Herculaneum, men groped and suffered blindly amid incomprehensible earthquakes seeking their lost homes, just like the cats in Henry Street. We are part and parcel of the same original substance, I said, and then my thoughts breaking off suddenly, I began to rejoice in Nature's unexpectedness and fecundity. She is never commonplace in her stories, we have only to go to her to be original, I muttered, as I returned through the silent streets. I could have imagined everything else, the wall-paper, the overmantel, and the French clock, but not the cats seeking for their lost hearths, nor is it likely that Turgenieff could, Balzac still less.

CHAP. IV.

A WEEK goes by easily amid renewals of friendship, and verifications of the people of "Hail and Farewell,"

one after the other—a roll-call in fact, all answering their names except Bailey and Yeats; Bailey died a few months ago of a gun-shot wound, and already Dublin society has forgotten him. His gift was atmosphere. He brought an atmosphere of happiness into the room; a precious gift truly for the conduct of life, but one so easily appreciated that it is forgotten as easily as the passage of a pleasant breeze coming and going in and out of a garden. Yeats now lives, or is going to live, in a ruined castle in Galway, for the sake of the spectres—such is the report, which, however untrue, is an acceptable explanation of his strange choice of dwelling—himself having become a myth from too long brooding on myths, and myths being, if not spectres, at least of the same kin. Another report avers that his retirement may be attributed to his belief that the poet should apply himself as soon as his poetry is written to the weaving of a " Poetic Personality." And at once the ruined castle rises before our eyes, for has it not been said that a poet must live in a cabin or a castle, these two dwellings representing the poles of humanity? Yeats' belief in his relationship to the Duke of Ormond precludes the cabin, and piecing the two reports, or shall we say the two myths, together, we seem to be justified in imagining him in the vaulted hall of the castle of Ballylee—weaving the myths that will preserve his works when all life has departed from them, passing the shuttle to and fro, weaving industriously, Lady Gregory standing by, distaff in hand.

And these twain visionaries recall my old friend, the Comte Villiers de L'Isle Adam, for Villiers believed himself to be the heir to the great name, and the conviction strikes root immediately that he would have welcomed Yeats as a dream for himself or as a subject of a story for others, summarising our poet in some melancholy and ornate phrase spoken by Yeats as he rises from the loom of poetic personality one sultry summer afternoon before

going down to Coole. Though my heart be empty of all else, he would say, his eyes wandering over the escutcheoned walls (escutcheoned in his imagination), though my heart be empty of all else, I bear in it at least the sterile glory of many forgotten dukes.

CHAP. V.

YOU are going by the Limited Mail, sir? the porter asked overnight, and I answered that I hoped there would be in me the needful strength of will to turn out of bed before six; but it was doubtful. No fear of that, sir, the porter replied; I'll get you up, and if you leave here at twenty minutes to seven you'll be in time. But it will be as well to order the car for half-past six; these carmen are always late and the horses on the night shift are a sorry lot, hardly able to pull the cars behind them.

There'll be neither breakfast nor bath, I murmured, and went to my room dreading the mental struggle that would befall me in the morning.

Nor was it a less tough one than I had imagined it, and had not the porter stood over my bed I should have slept for hours. My father was the same before me, one to whom an early rise was intolerable, only to see a horse gallop could he manage it.

At last I threw my legs out of bed and began to seek my clothes. The worst moment is over, I said, and at seven minutes past the half-hour a car arrived drawn by a horse that only a goat-herd could distinguish from a goat; and seeing that his horse, for it was one, did not inspire belief in his power to reach the station in time, the driver began to condone his appearance, saying it was the worst part of him, and amid many assurances we drove away, leaving the last glimpse of the flowering green behind us when we turned into Grafton Street,

a desert as all streets are at seven in the morning. But the emptiness of Grafton Street surprises us more than the emptiness of any other street, so accustomed are we to see it filled with thronging passengers. Its faint descent tried the power of the horse to keep back the car, and so feeble were his totterings that I began to fear we should miss the train, but forgot my fears as soon as we emerged from its narrowness, for the beauty of the day appeared in a delightful blueness overhead and in shadows falling westward from the pillared porticoes of the noble bank. How delightful it will be in Kildare, I said to myself, if we catch the train, and to the jarvey, that no more than a dozen minutes remained before the train started.

We'll be there in time, he said, and I contemplated once more the destruction of many a back-yard. A more than usually foolish revolution, I muttered; truly Catholic, I added, and was about to beg the jarvey not to whip his horse so cruelly, but before the words could be spoken the thought crossed my mind that if he did not urge his heavily laden horse up the hill-side I should be confronted to-morrow with the necessity of rising at six. It behooves him to suffer, I said. We suffer differently, but we all suffer. It is my suffering to witness his; he will forget but I shall remember; and as soon as we arrived at the station I applied myself to the elucidation of many irrelevant matters connected with my journey westward, and helped by the almost impenetrable dullness of the railway porter succeeded in ridding myself of all memory of the scarecrow horse. But no sooner had I comfortably settled myself in a seat than his pitifulness reappeared, and remained with me till the train had rolled some little distance into the country, and it might have remained with me all the way to Mullingar if a sudden memory of the beautiful flowering country we should soon be passing through had not blotted out his

unwelcome image. After all, I said, we arrived, and by getting me to the station he achieved his destiny; and with the same industry that he applied himself to his, let me apply myself to mine, which is clearly to recall the city as it was all last week engarlanded with chestnut, laburnum and lilac bloom; yes, and with hawthorn trees leaning over every railing. White, pink and rose hawthorn, one as beautiful as the other, I continued, and fell to thinking how last year travelling through the same country it had pleased me to imagine myself in the part of Paris! with this difference, that my trouble was not to discriminate between three beautiful women, but three beautiful trees—a more difficult task than the one accomplished on Mount Ida. . . . The white may be the beautifulest, but which smells the sweeter, the pink or the rose? I asked myself. And mile after mile of hawthorn bloom passed by unobserved, the reality blotted out by the potent remembrance of the hawthorns that had bloomed ten years ago in my garden in Ely Place. The blooms in memory are always sweeter than the blooms on the bough, I said; and on awaking fully from my meditation, I saw.

A country passing by me and in such incomparable bloom that it semed like madness. The madness of May, I said, for the 6th of June is as much May as June, and on this remark or aphorism, whichever it may be, my thoughts fled away like the cuckoo at the end of June. Whither they went I know not, nor do I know whither the cuckoo goes or the salmon, only that bird and fish return, and that our thoughts return too, sometimes bearing in their beaks new thoughts, if thoughts have beaks, and who will say they have not, and sharp claws.

And presently my thought of May returned, bearing in its beak a memory of Rossetti: one from the Blessed Damozel, the lady who leaned out of heaven with three

lilies lying asleep along her bended arm—a gift for the Virgin. A better gift for the Virgin would have been a wreath of hawthorn, one that would have reminded her more intimately of the beauty of earth than the lilies. An oversight on the part of Rossetti. . . . But, no, there are no hawthorns in ruined Galilee, and as likely as not that is why everybody was so discontented with his life in Galilee and failed to understand that our life is beautiful because it is transitory, and that the joys of heaven would weary us before we had been listening to sonatas for ten thousand years. But if there had been hawthorn in Galilee all might have been different, March in Galilee is May in England and had there been hawthorn in Galilee I should have noticed it at once.

And then, a little cross with myself for thinking of Galilee, a country that is responsible for more wasted time than any other, I said: the white, no doubt, is more beautiful than the pink, and yet the pink tree that has just fled past is extraordinarily beautiful. I remember it from last year, and in my memory it exhales a more subtle scent than perhaps the white. But am I sure that this preference is not a prejudice sprung from the fact that a large tree of pink grew in my garden when I lived in Upper Ely Place? And once again I fell to thinking of the hawthorns that had bloomed for me ten years ago in my garden. The blooms of yester year haunt us, I cried, and awaking suddenly I saw a country passing, beautiful as antiquity. And my thoughts turning to Thessaly I said:

Thessaly is too hot in June. Its nymphs and fauns, and Silenus, should migrate here at the end of April and tempt the druids of Maynooth out of their celibacy; and then, imagination taking the place of reason once again, I began to believe that a nymph would reveal herself to me if I were to keep my thoughts fixed on those dim sunny fields passing by, and sure enough I very soon

espied one reclining in a drift of haze that curled and went out along the edge of a pond.

Goddess or cloud, God knows which, I cried, and asked myself if I should allow the occasion to pass without stopping the train to inquire, for to let such an occasion pass without inquiry, I meditated, would be folly surely. But, alas, at the moment of starting to my feet to pull the cord of communication I foresaw the guard's face and the faces of many passengers agleam with various anger at the only worthy reason ever given by a passenger for the stopping of an express train—that he had been vouchsafed a glimpse of a goddess in a garment of drifting haze. And almost as distinctly as the altercation between me and the guard, the scene in the police court appeared to me, with myself in the dock pleading justification for my action, saying, and saying well, if a man may not stop the Limited Mail to see goddesses in drifting haze, for what may he stop the train? A belief in goddesses being essential for the maintenance of the world. If that were so the world would have ended long ago, his Worship raps out. But your Worship saw a goddess in the haze. Never saw such a thing in my life, his Worship answers. But I thought that your Worship married beautiful Miss Lynch from Partry. At which remark a cloud gathers in his Worship's face, and he declares that I am wasting the time of the Court, but not before I succeed in interjecting: your vision vanished like mine, and am I to understand that because yours endured a little longer than mine I am to be condemned to the cells while you go scot free?

Forty shillings or a month, the magistrate cries, inwardly pleased but unable to escape from the toils of the law.

And in such characteristic Irish fashion the adventure would have ended: forty shillings or a month! But forty shillings have often been wasted on things as unimportant

as the stopping of a train to see a goddess. My thought melted into a dream of the subsequent assemblage of the passengers, many of whom have been prone to search the hedgerows. Too late, too late, I cried; my goddess is now many hundred yards behind me . . . drunken up perchance by the sun.

As if to console me, a poem arose out of my very legitimate despondency, and in it Pan as he went down the Vale of Mænalus singing pursues a maiden and discovers a flute in one of the reeds into which he could pour his grief; and then I fell to thinking of the name Mænalus, but Mænalus is not a more beautiful name than Avoca; Greece lacks our incomparable haze—the only fitting garment for a goddess if she be not wholly ungarmented. Ah! if it were not for our incurable love of druids, Ireland would be teeming with nymphs and dryads. The last one was Etain, and we are told that the sweetness of her legs pierced one of our elder poets to the heart, and Mary whom we received in exchange has no legs, being a virgin, or if she had any, nobody saw them, not even her husband, so does a majority in this county aver, whereas the majority in the county I have come from says he did. An important question truly and one not less difficult to decide than the hawthorn.

CHAP. VI.

I SUPPOSE the climate is answerable for the virginity of our goddess, I said to myself, and the words might have given rise to some pleasant fancies if my eyes had not caught sight of a man in gaiters following a path through a field in which a long herd stood up to their knees in buttercups: one of our immemorial herdsmen, I said, and some thought concerning him expressed in *Salve* came upon me suddenly, and for a long time I sat chewing the cud of it, that the Irish herdsman divined

the steak in the bullock's rump with the same intuitive perception as the Greek did the statue in the marble. A long passage followed, one of my best, the point of it being that the Irish should be content with having produced the finest herdsmen in the world. And the witticism was continued into the sauce, for though the Irish had discovered the steak the sauce Bernaise was beyond the genius of the race.

A truly admirable appreciation of one's own country and countrymen, and after having enjoyed it I cannot do else than lose myself in admiration of the man's measured gait, and approve his project, which doubtless was to change the pasture of his herds. And having chosen the field in which his cattle are to graze, I said, he will stand leaning over a gate till dinner-time, an unending exemplar of Ireland. He was in the beginning and ever shall be, world without end. A race, I continued, that does not change; and at that moment an indolent priest was being driven swiftly along a pleasant road bending round a hill-side, and I added: he, too, is an exemplar of the Irish race as it always was and always will be, world without end. And whither goes he? To a convent to shrive some helpless nuns, or is he on his way to Maynooth, where the meals are in accordance with long ecclesiastical usage; or to some rich farmer's house chosen by him for stations?

The priest to his nuns and I to my reveries in a train that jolts and hurtles along at a fine rate by the side of an old canal full of reeds and rushes. We passed a lock-house seemingly in ruins. MacCan, I said, believed in the revival of the waterways, but since his death the canals have fallen into idleness, which is a pity, for the life of the canal is in keeping with our unaccentuated climate. But the ruin of the canal is not complete, I cried; for yonder comes a horse urged forward by a sapling freshly torn from the hedge. In Ireland nothing

disappears, all is that ever was; and pleased with the raciness of my thoughts, my eyes return to the landscape. England, I said, does not fade out of Ireland until we reach Mullingar, and after leaving Mullingar behind us we pass many spots almost undistinguishable from English scenery, for wherever the land rises out of bog rich fields begin and the trees emerge like vapours. Corot should have painted an Ireland. But why should his name have come into my mind, for I am weary of spinnage and vapour.

A lonely country, sir. The words startled me, and I could only answer my fellow-traveller: yes, sir, a lonely country. But gathering from his face that he seemed to expect something more from me than a mere repetition of the words he used, I roused into some sort of mental activity. The cattle aren't lonely; they're always in company like the monks and the nuns, I said, for in Ireland the first thought in a railway carriage is—am I travelling with a Protestant or a Catholic? His smile told me he was a Protestant, and from his speech and appearance I began to guess a landlord's agent, a man between fifty and sixty, tall and lean, reminding me of Don Quixote, and the Don's appearance is but the symbol of the Don's credulous soul; whosoever has been given the body has received the soul, or some part of it; and it was therefore grateful to me to hear before we reached Mullingar that he, too, had projects for the advancement of Ireland, all of which I had heard before, but which he seemed to exalt a little in the telling. And giving my ear to him I heard again the project for the establishment of factories for the compression of peat, which when compressed would yield as much heat as coal; with compressed fuel Ireland will become a great industrial nation, he said, and I answered that Ireland is so winning among her ruins that it would be a pity to reform her. She has rejected so many reformations that it would be a

pity if she now—I was going to say if she put off her Catholic rags and appeared in clean Pauline linen; but a cloud seemed to gather in my fellow-traveller's face, and instead of continuing my native protestantism, with a deft turn of words I whisked the conversation back to economic difficulties and professed sympathy with the building of piers, the laying down of oyster beds and a tunnel under the sea uniting Scotland with Ireland. Portpatrick and Galway, I said, could be connected by a line of railway and the bay thereby turned into a great Transatlantic port. A big job, he said. True, quite true, I answered, but realisable in the end. It might, however, be better to begin by setting up a bacon factory in Castlebar.

Every pig breeder, he said, could take a ten-pound share, and in Mayo, he continued, every cottager owns a pig. But can cottagers afford a ten-pound share? I interjected; and will you gaurantee a minimum price for the pigs? and of all is the Mayo pig the kind of pig that produces the London rasher?

My questions seemed to vex him, and we might not have spoken again during the journey had it not been for the rashers. It was their succulence that prompted him to address me again on the advantage a bacon factory would be to Castlebar and to Mayo generally, and wishing to hear his views I assumed so pleasant an air of acquiescence that before long the bacon factory was lost sight of and we were talking of the great changes that had come over the country since we were young men.

In former times, my traveller said, there was the big house, and the villagers always coming and going on some errand or another; the women coming up at midday with their husbands' and sons' dinners. A poor one, it is true, five or six potatoes tied up in a cloth, and a noggin of buttermilk which they would get from the dairy-maid. But in those days the people were contented with very

little, they never tasted meat but once a year and that at Christmas time, which they boiled in a pot, the only knowledge of cooking they knew. When the potatoes rotted in the famine years, the people had nothing, there never having been any factories for the making of cheese in Ireland. For some reason or another the Irish are not cheese eaters. The Welsh, I believe, are, and work all day nourishing themselves from time to time with a bite of cheese and a sup of beer. And then the Welsh are dissenters and radicals, whereas the villagers here are Catholic and like the big house for the hum of life always going on: the smithy with its clanging anvil and snoring bellows; the carpenter's shop, its threshold heaped with shavings—Micky Murphy in the background making a door or a window sash, and more ready than the smith himself to pass the time of day with whosoever might have a moment to spare. And I mustn't forget the sawyers, one of them in the pit and the other above him, sawing some balks of timber for Micky Murphy, who wanted timber for gates and door-posts. Always something going on, you see. And as likely as not some of the house servants had come up from the village: their fathers and mothers and their sisters and brothers were all welcome. And then there was the landlord hanging about the stable-yard with a couple of setters at his heels, and he always willing to speak to the tenants on Saturdays, hearing all their complaints, and when they had no complaints, which very often happened, they came up just for the sake of a talk. You see with all those things going on the country was never lonely, but now all I am telling you about has passed away and the people are beginning to feel the loneliness of the country very sore upon them.

But it was the tenants who wished to get rid of the landlords, I interjected. Yes, that is so, my friend replied, but you see the rents in former times were too high and

they couldn't pay them. But they'd like to have their landlords back again, with smaller rents, mind you. Yes, they would and leppin'. They'd sooner be bringing up their notes as in old times to the big house than sending them to the Board, which is a harder task-master than ever Clanricarde was, and altogether without consideration of special cases and circumstances. The way it is now is that the tenant just pays and if he fails to pay he goes, eviction in Ireland being easier than ever it was, without police and sub-sheriff. For you see if the Bishops agree, and there are a dozen on the Board, that a man must be put out, out he is put, for there isn't a man in Ireland that would dare to raise his voice against a Bishop. Out he goes and there's an end of it. Well, all that is contrary to the spirit of the Irish people, who have no taste for offices and clerks and routine work, and who like to know with whom they are dealing, as they have always done, and as their fathers before them: a clannish people, sir, who have not yet forgotten the chieftain they have gone to battle for. As I was saying to you, sir, the people miss the hum of life that was always going on around the old country houses. In exchange they've got the land.

Well, a very fair change, I interjected. But how long will they keep the land? Isn't it always passing from them again and again, for the Irish are a religious people and every man will leave a sum of money to the priest to say masses for his soul to keep it out of purgatory, though this much must be said, it isn't the peasant class that gives away to the priest but the small shopkeeping class; and the land it has gotten from the peasant goes in masses for the repose of souls.

The news that the land of Ireland had been wrenched from the landlords with so much trouble and was passing into the hands of the clergy interested me deeply, putting into my mind the thought that a third of the land of Eng-

land was Church property in Reformation times. It was, I said, the riches of the clergy that had set the people saying—the kingdom of heaven may be for us, but the kingdom of earth is for them. On that they began reading the Gospels, and it would be a wonderful thing surely if the avarice of the clergy turned the Irish into Protestants, the same as it did the English. Be this as it may, what Ireland needs is a new religion, and I pray that she may get one. Which? It matters not, but let her get one quickly, I muttered, and almost immediately after my traveller's voice awoke me from my reverie, and the truth became apparent that all the while I had been dreaming he had been telling a story.

It behooved me to reconstruct the first half from the beginning, for it was beyond my courage to say: what you told me about the passing away of the Irish land from the tenants to the clergy interested me so profoundly that I missed a good deal of the story you are telling! would you be kind enough to repeat it all over again? He might very well answer my request: if you didn't care to listen you must go without, and return to his paper, leaving me looking out of the window at the landscape regretting I had entered into conversation with him. All the same, I said, it was stupid of me to miss the beginning of his story; and it will be more stupid still if I do not give my ears at once to what he is telling about Joseph Appley.

CHAP. VII.

I'M sure I heard him say that Joseph Appley was from Wiltshire, my fellow-traveller repeated, and I tried to look as if the evidence pointed to Wiltshire. I have often heard Sir Hugh say that he picked him up in Wiltshire. Joseph was a boy at the time, he said, and a boy is picked very much like a berry from a hedge, like a berry;

I've often heard Sir Hugh say that he picked him from the hedge and that he became immediately after the best cab-boy in London. No matter what time Sir Hugh came out of a theatre his cab drove up, Joseph on the box ready to hop off it on the instant to open the door for Sir Hugh. I have heard Sir Hugh say that he couldn't understand by what process of thought Joseph divined his movements. He seems to know them instinctively, were Sir Hugh's very words to me.

But not having heard the beginning of the story I did not know who Sir Hugh was; an Irish landlord, I judged him to be by inference, but could not tell in what county till my fellow-traveller mentioned that Sir Hugh had won the Chester Cup with Tomboy, and the Cambridgeshire with Makebelieve. You must have heard of these horses, he said, and I answered that the names recalled a past time to me. A few moments after I remembered that Makebelieve had won the race carrying nine stone, which was considered in those days an extraordinary performance for a three-year-old. In those days, my fellow-traveller continued, Sir Hugh was coining money on the race-course. There was Chimney Sweep, another great horse of his, and Bayleaf was a fast mare, that won a great deal of money, and would have won a great deal more if she had been able to get the mile, but she always began to stop at the three-quarters. Joseph Appley was doing pretty well too, not a long way behind his master, not farther than a valet should be; a great pair surely in the old days, looked out for at the cock-pit, the prize-ring and the race-course. Sir Hugh thought the world and all of Joseph Appley, who began, as I have told you, as a cab-boy and afterwards became the best valet Sir Hugh ever had in his life. A little extravagant, Sir Hugh would say, Joseph's maxim always being that the best was good enough for me. Nor was Joseph quite satisfied even with the best; he'd always tell the trades-

man: now if you do this extra well, I'll give you a little more. But, said my fellow-traveller, at the time I am telling of, a little extravagance more or less didn't matter; a few pounds one way or the other make no difference when you're winning big handicaps. But the day came when Sir Hugh's horses were not so fast as they used to be, and perhaps that was the reason he took to himself a wife; her fortune paid some of his debts and allowed him to run horses again, for at the time of his marriage he hadn't paid off his forfeits: he owed money to Weatherby; and after his marriage—well, there were politics, and in those days elections cost a lot of money; Sir Hugh's politics were not very popular, and he had to spend a great deal in making himself popular: the stud was expensive, and his lady wasn't content to live at Muchloon alone while her husband was away in England. She had people staying in the house all the time, and with Joseph running the house on the principle that the best of everything was good enough for Muchloon, it is easy to imagine the great hump of debt that began to rise up on Sir Hugh's shoulders. At last the day came. I'm going back to London, Appley, to economise. Joseph muttered (he always muttered a little) that he had never heard of anyone going back to London to economise before. But wouldn't you like to come to London with me? he asked. Joseph said he was too old. But I should have thought that he would have liked to return to his own country, I interjected. My fellow-traveller rapped out that England was far behind Joseph by this time and Ireland as far as ever ahead of him, though he had married the lady's maid, a Catholic, who, of course, couldn't marry him unless he promised to bring up his children Catholics, which he did; and when the family left him alone in charge of Muchloon he made the last effort to become an Irishman that an Englishman can make: he became a Catholic; but this change didn't alter

matters, for I think he was more English after the change than before it.

What sort of woman was his wife? I asked, for Joseph's unfortunate life began to interest me. A long, melancholy woman, my fellow-traveller answered, and her daughter as lank and melancholy as herself. The son was a bit podgy like his father—well-meaning but good-for-nothing. I think Joseph was always ashamed of his family, the females especially: for I remember it always seemed to irritate him if his wife and daughter were met on the kitchen stairs on their way to the pantry. A pair of long-faced, cringing women were the two of them; and the wife couldn't have been different from the daughter; yet Joseph was mad to get her. A strange infatuation that refusals couldn't cool. Propinquity I suppose it was, she being the lady's maid at Ardath and Sir Hugh always going to Ardath—— Master after mistress and valet after maid, I jerked in. Something like that, my travelling companion answered. I don't want to revive old scandals, but there was a story going that one of the ladies there loved Sir Hugh in his bachelor days, and this I know for certain, that she was the only untitled lady at the great dinner he gave after winning the Cambridgeshire.

A curious piece of evidence to adduce, and altogether insufficient it seemed to me to be; I should have liked to put a few questions, but withheld them, afraid to lose the tale of Joseph Appley's misfortunes.

Well, one of his misfortunes was this: you see when Sir Hugh died, the heir was a minor and wanted money to spend on his pleasure in London, and to get this money he applied to Joseph, who negotiated a loan from one of the tenants, and when her ladyship heard that Joseph had done this, she sent him packing into the village, and Joseph in an Irish village was a sad spectacle. Everybody liked Joseph, but an alien he was, never was there

such an alien before as Joseph, and to this day I'm wondering how he endured two years in Ballyholly before the heir, who was then the owner of Muchloon, restored him to his pantry. It was pleasant to see him back in it; he put him back into his pantry, paid him his wages, and these were spent on the farm, which was a failure, for his two sons were, as I have said, helpless boys, wastrels I suppose you'd call them. Some sort of misfortune was always falling upon them, and it was always some new misfortune they had to tell. The Irish are very fond of sad stories, and the Appleys could tell how the mare and foal had died on them, but they always forgot to tell they were leaving their old father to starve in the great Georgian mansion. Poor boys, they were starving themselves; and it was fortunate that I went there one day else Joseph might have died of hunger. What's the matter, Joseph? says I. You're looking thin and pale. I'm starving, sir, was all he answered. What could I do but put my hand into my pocket and give him five pounds? But, on looking closer, his face told me he needed food at once, and remembering I had brought some luncheon with me I sent down to the stables for it and shared it with him in his pantry, on the table on which he used to brush his old master's clothes and clean his boots. He wanted to open up the dining-room, but I wouldn't let him. We'll just have a snack together, said I, and a talk about the horses and the spring handicaps. Have you seen the weights for the City and Suburban? Joseph said he hadn't seen a newspaper for a long time, and I took one out of my pocket, a copy of *The Sportsman,* a paper he knew nothing about. Joseph's paper was *Bell's Life.* If I came into the pantry unexpectedly he'd put the paper into his press, into his wonderful press, out of which everything seemed to come. You couldn't ask Joseph for anything he couldn't produce from that press. His press was a great wonder to me when I was

a boy; I used to try to peep over his shoulder when he opened it. But Joseph was careful never to allow anybody to look into his press. He'd just give what he was asked for and lock the press abruptly. But one day I espied a packet of newspapers, not one packet but many, and all tied up with a string very carefully. So you keep the file, Joseph, if not all of it of the time when you and Sir Hugh were about together and when you very nearly challenged the Game Chicken to a fight you not knowing who he was? You see I remember everything you tell me. Even Joseph could be flattered, but it required a little pressure to get him to admit that he had a complete *Bell's Life;* why he kept it God knows. I've often imagined him reading the prize-fights and the race-meetings and the cock-fights all over again in the long evenings at Muchloon. I suppose that was it, but he never told me that was why he kept them, the most secretive little man ever known: you might tell him anything and be sure that he would not repeat it.

A little man? I said. I imagined him as a tall, lean hungry man. You got that idea, my fellow-traveller replied, from what I told you of his wife: a tall, melancholy woman. No, he married the very opposite to himself. Joseph was a short-necked, full-bodied, white-faced little man, rotund in later life. Don't I remember, my fellow-traveller continued, the short fleshy nose and his running walk? And did he live all alone in Muchloon? Did all the servants go away with Sir Hugh to London? I asked. Not all, my fellow-traveller answered. The old cook and housemaid remained with him, but they were very old and died a few years afterwards, blessing the master because he left them on board wages. Servants were very grateful in former times and thought a great deal was being done for them if they were not left to starve. And there were no complaints about the dinners they were given, nor the rooms they were put to sleep in.

The servants always slept in large subterranean dwellings in Muchloon, at the end of the kitchen passage; the eighteenth century in Ireland, and perhaps elsewhere, did not look after their servants as well as the nineteenth.

Is Joseph still alive? I asked, for my imagination was now filled with the personality of the old servants, whom I could see in my mind's eye taking the air on the weed-grown terrace, and in my mind's ear was the peacock, the last of a hundred, uttering doleful cries from the branches of a great cedar.

No, said my companion, Joseph is dead; he died in his pantry five years ago. I saw him three weeks before his death; he was then eighty but still thinking of the autumn handicaps, and as he fancied a horse for Cesarewitch I said: Joseph, I'll put you on ten shillings. The horse won, but Joseph was not here to receive it. I'm sorry, for I'd have liked him to have won his last bet, I said. It didn't matter. The ten shillings that I put him on at twenty-five to one illuminated the last day of his life, and perhaps he died seeing in a vision his horse passing first beyond the post. An honest death-bed vision that would be. A man's death should be part and parcel of his life. So Joseph died English to the last? Yes, my companion answered, Ireland failed to assimilate him, and then, anxious to make amends at the end of the story for my inattention at the beginning, I asked for news of Joseph's sons, and learned that they had sold their interest in the farm and purchased some cars and horses. They were now car-drivers in Athenry, and Muchloon stands empty on its green hilltop, the present owner not being rich enough to live there. The most he can do, continued my fellow-traveller, is to keep a caretaker in the house. When he goes the next man will sell the lead off the roof, and Muchloon will be added to the ruins of all sorts that encumber Ireland. The finest assortment

of ruins the world can show. From the fifth century onwards every century is represented; English and Irish ruins, ruined houses and ruined lives.

At the next station I was bidden good-bye, and lay back in my seat with a very vivid impression in my heart of a man that lived in the world unhappily.

CHAP. VIII

ATHLONE was the desination of my travelling companions, and when they were gone I had the carriage to myself, but only for a few minutes. Just before starting a man entered, and he came in so quietly that I did not raise my eyes but continued my meditations. Neither cough nor sneeze nor shuffle of feet nor rustle of newspaper nor match was struck to disturb me: it was the silence that awakened me from my dream of the old English servant who had always remained a stranger, an alien in the country whither chance had carried him.

My new travelling companion was a frail old man of seventy: a priest, I said, grown old in his craft, and I began to scrutinise his face, reading in it only obedience to rule: like one asleep in his instinct, I added; and asked myself if he were ordered by his Church to commit some act that raised his conscience in revolt would he accept his conscience as his guide or would he place his Church above his conscience? The answer my reason returned to this question was that the dilemma I had formulated could not arise, for it was plain from the man's face that he had long ago accepted the Church as his conscience.

He sat at the further end of the railway carriage, his face bent upon his breviary and almost hidden in the shadow of a large-brimmed hat. It was this partial view of his face, a silhouette in which little appeared but a long, finely cut nose, that reminded me of a face I had seen many years ago; and in the shadow of a hat, I said.

I never knew more of the face that I am trying to remember, only the pointed oval and the long, finely cut nose. The eyes I never saw, they were always averted from me, just like the priest's are now. If it should be the same priest! The word "priest" stirred my memory, and of a sudden it became certain that the old man reading his breviary at the further end of the railway carriage was none other than Cunningham's spiritual director; the priest who used to wait on Cunningham's doorstep when I lived in Upper Ely Place—a tiny *cul de sac*—five little eighteenth-century houses built on a sort of terrace overlooking a garden, a square, about a rood of ground belonging to No. 4, the house I lived in. A quiet little old-world spot shut off from the grand houses of Ely Place by tall iron gates; marked off, I should have said, for the gates were always open, and the rare sight-seer led by chance into this forgotten corner of the city must have often wondered why the gates were ever put there, for what purpose—to defend Ely Place against the robbers that used to descend from the Dublin mountains to raid the city as late as the eighteenth century? The sight-seer's fancy must have wandered into this explanation of the gates and out of it into another equally absurd, but it could not have occurred to anybody in the twentieth century that the gates were merely ornamental, designed with no other view than beauty; he may, however, have failed to notice that they added to the seclusion, and were never shut for the reason that it were vain to shut gates on a forgotten corner.

Often from my windows have I watched the vagrant sight-seer pace the little pavement the length of my garden and seen him stop perplexed by the old-world beauty of the place, by the little alley of lilac bushes, the laburnums, hawthorns and the great apple-trees; the flower walk filled with old-fashioned flowers, and the pump by the elder bush under the fig-trees, could not fail

to stir even the most sluggish imagination. Myself, too, pacing the sward, my hands behind my back, composing, or idly at work in the flower beds on either side of the gravel walk, or listening to the sparrows quarrelling in the hawthorns or flying from the bees that often pursued me, or thinking of my neighbours whilst sitting under the great apple-tree, must have added to the romance.

At No. 5, a household of elderly women with a boy destined for the Church, already morose. At No. 4, myself. At No. 3, Cunningham, the man whose story I am about to relate; at No. 2, a couple of noisy girls with a taste for brogue, dogs, bicycles and whistling. At No. 1, a celebrated lawyer of retiring presence, without a story, if that be possible. We all no doubt have stories, and death is a tragedy which finds its way into every life sooner or later, slowly or swiftly, and I know of no more moving tragedy than the death of my next-door neighbour.

I often guessed him to be a retired tradesman, without however being able to fit him into any trade. He would not do for a grocer—grocers are men of serious mien, and Cunningham, to put it bluntly, was a comic little fellow, suited to the music hall stage, one whose turn could be relied upon to revive the drooping spirits of an audience after a sentimental song with harp accompaniment. A butt of a man, as we say in Ireland; thick-set, with a large head and the rolling gait of a dwarf when he fared forth after his dinner about three o'clock, always dressed the same, in a yellow overcoat and wide grey trousers, a corpulent cigar always in his mouth and a white flower in his button-hole, a jolly little fellow to the casual observer, but to me, who saw him every day, his humour seemed superficial and to overlie a deep-set melancholy—the melancholy of the dwarf, somebody once said, and the words put a thought of Velasquez's dwarfs into my mind. In earlier centuries he would have drifted

into the palace, but how did he escape the music hall, I often murmured, and set to snail hunting while considering the little man whose life was as strange as his appearance, for he seemed to be without any friends, nobody ever crossed his threshold except his servant, an old woman who always bade me the hour of the day; and it was from her I learnt that when Cunningham went forth in the afternoon he would not return until seven in the evening: and all that while he'll be walking round Phœnix Park, she said, talking to the many people he meets with on the way, for the master is well known to everybody in the city of Dublin. But he never asks anybody to his house, I said. No, she answered; no one comes here. But he's well known and respected in the city of Dublin.

When we passed each other in the street he always averted his eyes, and if I had been polite I should have imitated him, but I could not keep myself from looking into his comical eyes turned up at the corners, and wondering at the great roll of flesh from ear to ear, and at the chins descending step by step into his bosom. But my knowledge of Cunningham did not exceed the facts observed by myself and related by his housekeeper: till one day, some months later, I was kept waiting at Sir Thornley Stoker's, my presence causing the doctor some embarrassment, for there was some shutting of doors and a hurried exit through the hall that set me wondering who the man or woman could be that Sir Thornley Stoker did not wish me to see. The faint surprise this caused was increased by the doctor's hilarity when I was admitted into his study. He lay back in his Chippendale arm-chair overcome by some uncontrollable mirth. At last in reply to my demands of an explanation he blurted out: you've just missed seeing Cunningham. I asked him to stay to meet you but the moment your name was mentioned he snatched up his hat. It's a pity you don't know Cunningham. Cunningham is Dublin in essence. You

see, read and understand Dublin in Cunningham. An epitome, an abridgement, a compendium of Dublin. But why won't he know me? The doctor seemed unwilling to answer my question, and this made me very curious to hear the reason, but I soon began to perceive that the doctor did not know exactly the reason of Cunningham's aversion. Very likely because we're next-door neighbours, I said. There may be something of that in it, the doctor answered, and all the while his lips trembled with laughter. At last he could control his hilarity no longer, and I watched him roll over in his wonderful Chippendale chair. Now what is it? I asked, and he began to tell me that Cunningham was possessed of all the drollery of the world and could control any meeting, do what he liked with it, and then the doctor began to repeat himself, telling me that Cunningham knew everybody and was always overflowing with comicality, and seized by a sudden memory the doctor exploded with laughter. If you had only heard him just now telling—— But do tell me. I can't tell you. It's the Dublin accent and the Dublin idiom. It was all about *Evelyn Innes*. You don't know what you've missed, and he turned over in his chair to laugh again. No, there's no use my trying to tell it; you should hear Cunningham. But I can't hear Cunningham; he won't know me. At last, apologising for spoiling the story, Sir Thornley told me that I must take for granted the racy description of two workmen who had come to Upper Ely Place to mend the drains in front of my house.

After having dug a hole, they took a seat at either end, and sat spitting into it from time to time in solemn silence, until at last one said to the other: do you know the fellow that lives in the house forninst us? You don't? Well, I'll tell you who he is; he's the fellow that wrote *Evelyn Innes*. And who was she? She was a great opera singer. And the story is all about the ould hat. She was lying on a crimson sofa with mother-of-pearl legs

when the baronet came into the room, his eyes jumping out of his head and he as hot as be damned. Without as much as a good-morrow, he jumped down on his knees alongside of her, and the next chapter's in Italy.

The crimson sofa, I said, with the mother-of-pearl-legs, and the baronet " as hot as be damned " would be about as much of the story as a Dublin workman would be likely to gather from the book.

But if you had heard himself tell it, the doctor chortled. He always speaks of you as " George," the doctor added, and he again became speechless. Thompson, he said at last, knows Cunningham better than I; he pulled him through a long and serious illness when he was landlord of the Blue Anchor in Abbey Street. So he's a retired publican, I answered. I always saw a retired tradesman in him but—— But what? the doctor said. Only this, that he reminded me more often of the chairman in a music hall; he can troll out a song, I hear him sometimes of a Sunday morning through the wall; and behind the bar he would be as popular as in front of the footlights. A dangerous trade his for an Irishman, the doctor said, for the host must drink with his customers, a sort of assurance that the quality of the whisky is all right. So he's a retired publican, I continued. And a very successful publican, Stoker interjected. He brought seventeen thousand pounds out of the business. But Thompson will tell you more about him than I can.

Sir William Thompson was Sir Thornley Stoker's brother-in-law, and on my next visit to 54 Stephen's Green heard that there was nobody like Cunningham to raise a laugh against the clergy. Our clergy? I said. His own clergy, Thompson answered, and he recalled some of Cunningham's sallies.

But if he knows Catholicism to be so unworthy, how is it that he has not discovered himself to be a Protestant?

Ah, Sir William answered, you ask that question be-

cause you haven't learnt to understand Ireland. Cunningham was sent to confession when he was seven years of age, and his confessor so kneaded hell into his mind that neither drink nor women could enable him to forget it afterwards. There's too much punishment in our theology, and it is even more prominent in Catholic religious education, for the Catholics have purgatory. I don't know where they get it from, but purgatory is the boy that robs the widow and the orphan for them, and purgatory and hell work together in Catholic picture books and prayers —red-hot devils stoking the fire, lakes of boiling pitch, and with the excellent result, from the priest's point of view, that the Catholic mind is paralyzed. With the front of his mind Cunningham sees that his clergy think more of possessing themselves of the property of their parishioners than of anything else; that they haunt death-beds and despoil widows and orphans without mercy. Every month a will in which a man leaves all his money for masses for the repose of his soul is contested in the Law Courts. Cunningham knows all this; he's a shrewd man, he would not have brought seventeen thousand pounds out of the Blue Anchor if he hadn't been a shrewd man, but at the back of his mind there is fear of hell and purgatory. The doctor stopped speaking, his face becoming grave and thoughtful. A moment after he broke into a smile. To appreciate Cunningham, he said, you must hear him talk; a spring of natural humour which you say you have never met with in Ireland and which you deny exists. I'd like you to meet Cunningham, but he's afraid of you, I think. But why, I asked, should he be afraid of me? He's a little queer, but nothing serious, the doctor answered.

A little later Stoker returned to Cunningham's humour and tried to explain it, telling that it flowed along like a brook, as spontaneous and as natural, rising up out of himself without artifice. Yes, I think I understand; with the smack of spring water on it, I answered, and the

doctor told of Cunningham's power over an audience; how he captivated it and held it by the raciness of his wit. I should like you to meet him, he repeated. But if he won't meet me there's no help for it, I answered. And bidding the doctor good-bye I returned home, remembering more distinctly than anything else what the doctor had said about Cunningham's fear of hell.

Yes, I said to myself, that is characteristic of Ireland, fear of hell, and I fell to thinking of the Irish publican, saying to myself, his seventeen thousand pounds may develop easily into scruples of conscience, I wonder!

CHAP. IX.

THE days melted into weeks, as their wont is, and the weeks accumulated, and from my doorstep this year as last year I saw Cunningham start forth every afternoon, rolling down the pavement as one of Velasquez's dwarfs might, a white flower in his button-hole, a corpulent cigar in his mouth. He returned after having accomplished several miles to a lonely dinner and a long evening by himself. Sometimes, I said, he has the old woman up in the drawing-room and chats with her. And little by little the desire to discover a theme in which Cunningham would display himself began to fidget me, and when the sanitary inspector condemned my drains I sent his report to Cunningham, who returned the report just as if he were able to see into my mind and had read there that I could not do else than look upon him as a type. If we met in the street coming from different directions he avoided my look, and he never stopped to gaze into my pretty garden, and there were times when my garden was a very pretty one, especially in early spring when the apple-trees were in bloom, and later the hawthorns, and afterwards in late summer, when the sweet-pea was in

flower. But he never looked at my flowers, and nobody ever came to see him, until one day I saw the grey stony face of the priest sitting opposite to me in the train on Cunningham's doorstep, and fell to wondering what his errand might be. A few days after I caught sight of the priest again, and henceforth not many days passed without my seeing him; every week he appeared on the doorstep, and the stony face put thoughts into my mind of the terrors it was the duty of the priest to foster: however much he might deprecate as a man the despoiling of widows and orphans he must not impugn the advantage it is to the sinner to leave money for masses for the salvation of his soul.

The priest's face never changed expression, nor did he look up at me; and though I often passed by him and strove to attract his eyes, they remained fixed on the doorstep whilst he waited for the servant to open the door for him. And the grey, stony face of the priest on the doorstep pursued me during my walks, setting me thinking of the drama in progress, only a wall, I said, separating me from it: a poor little man of unbalanced mind rapidly losing his wits at the thought of the almost endless ages he will have to spend in purgatory, expiating the sins of his youth, unless he leaves the money he acquired in the Blue Anchor to the Church for masses for the repose of his soul. Sad alternatives: to despoil one's relations or remain in purgatory, and in imagination I could see the twain sitting opposite each other; a look of horror on the publican's face, the priest's grey and immovable.

CHAP. X.

ONE day as I came down to breakfast I heard a woman talking to my servants and there was from time to time a great wail of grief in her voice, and in grave appre-

hension I asked myself: what strange and doleful story can she be telling, and my heart beat faster as I descended the kitchen stairs.

What is this, what is this? I cried, and a moment after I recognised in our visitor the woman who looked after poor Cunningham.

Oh, sir, she exclaimed; O Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the master is after hanging himself this morning out of the banisters, and she continued her story, sobbing and wailing from time to time, and by degrees I learnt that on not finding him in his bedroom when she took up his cup of tea in the morning, she waited, expecting that he was in the closet, but as he did not return, and not hearing him about she began to be alarmed and started looking for him, and it was from the banisters of the top storey that she found him hanging.

You don't sleep in the top storey?

No, sir, I sleep in the basement.

Was he dead when you found him?

Maybe he wasn't; he must have gone up the stairs to hang himself only a minute or so before I brought him up his tea.

And he was dead before you could get a knife to cut him down?

There was a knife on the tray, sir; but I didn't like to cut him down for fear that he would hurt himself in the fall, and I ran out without my cap or anything to fetch the police.

But for what reason did he hang himself? I asked. He wasn't in want of money?

No, sir, that wasn't it. He left the money a while back to the Church for masses to be said for his soul. But you see, sir, the priest used to be telling him that he couldn't keep himself from the drink. Maybe you saw the priest standing on our doorstep, sir?

Yes, yes, I answered.

The poor master often fancied himself a bit queer in his mind, though, indeed, he was not, sir. He was not indeed; he was as sane as you or I. It was easy to twist him so that he'd go out of his wits, and he afraid that he might lose the wits when there wasn't a priest next or near him to hear his confession; it was that was troubling his mind. And that's what they would be talking about upstairs, the priest urging him to go into John-o'-God's and be looked after there.

John-o'-God's, I repeated; what a strange name.

Yes, sir, but you must know it, the asylum up in the woods by the Scalp. And it was fear of going there that drove him to the hanging, I'm sure of that. For only the night before, when I was sitting in the drawing-room with him, he said to me: they'll never get me as long as I have this hand, and they'll never get me there.

It was at that moment that the front door bell rang. My secretary, I said. She came down to the kitchen and heard the story over again from the old woman, and going upstairs together she said to me: I saw Mr. Cunningham last night returning home, carrying something under his coat, and his face frightened me. He must have been planning it then.

Carrying something under his coat?

Yes, one end of it was showing; a rope it seemed to me to be.

No, it wasn't a rope, a strap, I said. He must have gone down to buy it and returned home as you were leaving, about seven o'clock. Afraid of John-o'-God's he hanged himself—only in John-o'-God's could he escape from temptation, and only there could he be sure of having a priest to shrive him at the last moment, and only in death could he escape John-o'-God's. And once in John-o'-God's he could not unmake his will. It's neat, I said, and the girl's eyes returned to me as we stood looking at each other.

A moment after my eyes returned to the priest sitting in the railway carriage, to the thin, refined face in which there was neither cruelty nor kindness, only an impersonal will, the will of the tooth in the cog wheel of the machine, no more than that; and I watched it till pity of Cunningham turned to pity of the priest and a dream began to unwind of the intimate horror that possesses a man when he begins to realise that he is no better than a priest.

The train was stopping and the priest left the train at Castlebar to continue his ministration where and how I have no knowledge.

CHAP. XI.

NO passenger for Westport entered the carriage at Castlebar to distract my thoughts from Cunningham's last days, and for some time, how long I cannot say, I was considering how the idea of hanging himself had grown in his mind, taking possession of it till nothing else seemed real, or true, or worth thinking about. At times, I said, he must have been attracted by the idea of escape, as a hunted animal might be, and there must have been other times when he remembered that to take one's life is a mortal sin for which there is punishment. Yet despite all the descriptions of hell that his mind had been terrorised with, the fear of John-o'-God's was greater. But how can one know what passed in that failing brain? He must have suffered vaguely and intensely, as a lost dog suffers who knows not whither his master has gone or if he will ever return, or like the bee that has gotten into this carriage and strives to escape through the sunlit pane. A poor bumble bee, a silly insect compared with the bees that used to work in my garden forming combs with such economy of space that the mathematician is obliged to say it could not be done better. But the silly bumble bee merely makes a round hole, and therefore is not able to lay

up sufficient store of honey for the winter. My knowledge of bee life here ended, and my thoughts went to the poor bumble anxious to escape from the train. It has been carried long past its hive, I said, if the bumbles have hives, and will not find its way back. It will wander among the furze of yon hill and die at season's close, but that is better than to be slashed down by the porter's towel at Westport; and forthright I began a chase of the bee, handkerchief in hand, catching the insect at last and throwing it from the window. A moment after it seemed to be back again, or another bee had come in, and overcoming some reluctance to continue the chase, I began it again and the insect was put out to seek sufficient honey for its life among the low rocky hills; if it could not gather honey, to die as bees die, very much as we do, I said, and in the enjoyment of my satisfied conscience fell to wondering at the natural pity that had compelled me to risk being stung for so faint a result as the prolongation of a bee's life—a week at most, I said, in some fragile bloom. By some odd connection of ideas the bee recalled to my mind a nun that I had not dared to set free, and to help the time away I summoned the circumstances of the happy sunny morning that I started from Paris to meet a lady who was coming from Etretat. We were to spend the day together at Rouen; and, being an adept in the mystery of time-tables, she had informed me of the departure of a certain train from the Gare St. Lazare which would arrive at Rouen at a few minutes past midday and she hoped to find me waiting for her on the platform.

It had been arranged that we were to breakfast together and visit the Cathedral afterwards, and to this happiness I had been looking forward, and not less eagerly to the hours between the Cathedral and dinner: for our courtship had lasted a long while, delayed by the lady's sense of sin and its consequences, but of late it had seemed to

me that her sense of sin had weakened, and so seriously that there was no saying what might not befall her between Cathedral and dinner unless clerestory, nave, aisle or ambulatory should cast her back again into past and present perplexities of conscience. And with the danger of the Cathedral well in my mind, which could not be avoided, but would have to be faced, I repaired to the railway station and waited in a dusty station, enlivened only by the cackling of peasant women and several crates of ducks and geese. The fowls, being packed too tightly for comfort, cackled in terrified accents, thrusting their heads forth, withdrawing them quickly to avoid the caresses of a small boy; and the same pity that had compelled me to release the bee afflicted me again. I should have liked to have given the fowls their freedom, but this was impossible, and I walked perturbed and wearied by the monotonous cackle of peasant women and fowls, till at last a nun lifted her eyes to mine as she passed me by: a strange glance of inquiry it was, a look that I could not do else than to interpret as the appeal of one human being to another for help. That her look was one of appeal I am certain now, after many years, but in the railway station it was different. I remembered as I walked back and forth that I had heard of prostitutes disguising themselves as nuns, but I did not believe the nun who had raised her eyes to mine was a prostitute. If I had, her image would have worn away like the image of a coin, whereas her image is as clear in my mind as the image on a coin just come from the mint; a long thin pointed oval face, well-shapen grey eyes illuminating a white formal pallor, a long thin nose and a small chin; a plain woman it is true, but her plainness was an interesting plainness. The habit she wore was black, without white forehead band; and I remember the well-wrought cross hanging on her breast; she was a young woman

who might be twenty—and was not more certainly than twenty-three or four. She passed without loitering, her eyes inviting speech, with a view, I said, to obtaining my help. It cannot be else. But I shall know for certain the next time she passes, and when we crossed each other again as before her eyes threw out the same inquiry.

There were only a few peasant women in the railway station when I arrived. She must have come in a few minutes after me, I said, and if she looks again I'll speak, and, on a resolve to offer help to the nun if she should ask for help, my eyes went to the clock: the hands pointed to three minutes to twelve and I said: if my lady were to find me engaged in conversation with a nun, my chances of getting her will be prejudiced maybe.

The nun passed out of the station, and I hesitated whether I should follow her. She can't deceive me, I said; half-a-dozen words and I shall know all about her. Moreover, it isn't likely that a Rouenaise would rely on such a romantic deception *pour faire un homme,* an expression that Balzac appreciates as *le sublime argot des filles.* Moreover, were she a punk she would not come to an empty railway station to ply her trade; and if she did she'd wait for the express from Etretat to come in. It may be that I did not think quite so clearly at the time as I am thinking now, but I'm certain the woman wasn't a punk disguised as a nun. The moment was an anxious one, so anxious that I remember the wide rough open thoroughfare rising slightly, with trees on either side, and at the head of the road the bridge which she crossed on her way back to the convent—she left it after long resistance, for she could not believe else than that the impulse compelling her to return to life was but a temptation of the devil. She looked back once and the moment remains on my mind in as clear outline as the face of the nun.

The instinct of life, I said, at last broke the chains of

prejudice and convention, the door stood invitingly open; she passed out; her courage carried her to the railway, and what is more likely than that in her soul crisis she forgot she had no money for her journey. Nuns have no money! At sight of me hope blossomed again in her heart. I looked like one who would sympathise, who would understand, and who could lend her the sum of money she needed.

She would have said: as soon as I reached home my relations, my friends, will return you the money you so kindly lent me, and my answer would have been: a letter from you telling me how you fare will be preferable. The debt, if you will let it remain one, will be a gift inestimable.

These words we might have exchanged in the few minutes before the train arrived from Etretat; they would have been treasured like jewels and would have cheered me when myself seemed to myself no more than a shameful incident in the stream of life. The words we would have exhanged would have helped me to remember that I was worth at least one good action, but the good action drifted by me as the saving plank drifts by a swimmer. Nor is it too much to say that her words would have brightened my death-bed. But I missed my adventure, remaining hypnotised by an imaginary fear: my lady would have loved me better for my action when she heard the story, and it would have rendered her immune from the influence of the Cathedral. But why think of her, she is no part of the story that filled my heart to overflowing on the way to Westport.

Her chance gone by for ever, I said, she will return to her convent to weep till her heart becomes dry; the piercing will at first seem unendurable, but it will die down till she feels nothing of the old desire, no faintest echo of it, and she'll be glad and believe the peace she is

enjoying comes from God, unsuspicious that it is the absorption of the individual will in the will of the community.

CHAP. XII.

WE were now within three miles of Westport, its hills unveiling crest after crest to eyes that rejoice in outline. How is it, I asked myself, that we can always tell if an artist has drawn a hill badly?—a hill may be of any shape, yet we can say always if a hill in a picture is well drawn. It would not be true to say that the Dublin mountains are ill drawn, though they are as shapeless as pillows and bolsters, in a bad light, and no better than waves in a good. Now if Monet had drawn them—— But would he draw what was not laid out for drawing? As there is a great deal in nature that is not laid out for drawing, the first business of the artist is to select; a head, badly placed in the canvas and badly lighted, demands all the skill of a great artist, and even he may not be able to do what Nature has set her face against his doing. We must not, I continued, enter into competition with nature, and all the lack-lustre pictures painted in the eighties rose up before my eyes: the strips of grey sky and the sage-green foregrounds we used to admire. We used to admire Watts, who entered into competition with Titian; but all competition is to be deplored, I cried out, somewhere between Castlebar and Westport, æsthetic reverie after æsthetic reverie helping the time away till a beautiful bridge came in sight of ten or a dozen tall arches spanning a deep valley, the tallest arch rising to at least a hundred feet.

The straight parapet reminded me of Waterloo Bridge. Waterloo Bridge passes into slums, I said, but on the thither side this bridge is engulfed in woods—an admirable bridge, a delightful contribution to a beautiful town, declining, it is true, but are not all neighbourhoods declin-

ing? Piccadilly is now a mart consisting principally of tobacco and jewellery shops, interspersed with clubs—the clubs were once the dwellings of the aristocracy of England—Lord Palmerston's house only ceased to be his house in my boyhood; and for long afterwards Piccadilly was a great residential quarter. Park Lane, once so dandy, has fallen into a vulgar thoroughfare through which many hundreds of buses pass daily. And if we cross the Channel we find the same decadence. The Champs Élysées is a mere show of motor cars, and the Place Vendôme a market for picture bonnets, gowns and jewellery. And let us not think of the great Palais Royal and who lived there, lest we burst into tears at the thought of its ruin. And our café has become the haunt of panders and punks. As all the world declines visibly it would be vain to expect Westport to be exempt from the general declension. But this may be said: Westport declines beautifully; abandoned mills may be a sad spectacle in the eyes of the merchant, but in the artist's eyes these warehouses rise up "like palaces in the dusk," and no ugly one, though the sun be shining and an east wind blowing, for saplings have grown up and birds have discovered a paradise amid the ruins.

A river, spanned in the principal street by stone bridges, flows through Westport, and the stream is lined with noble elms, with seats between the trees for the vagrant, and some beautiful houses for his regalement. The bank was once the house to which the Dowager Lady Sligo was wont to retire on the marriage of her son, and to this day it is known as the Dower House. Her journey, no doubt accomplished in a coach and four, was not a long one, for the gates of the domain faced the little river that proceeds through the domain out into the sea. It is sad that the beautiful house, with as noble a sweep of staircase as any in Merrion Square, should have been turned into a prosaic bank, and we seek consolation and find it

in the domain wall, a great piece of feudal masonry that ascends hills and drops into valleys mile after mile.

Westport strikes off to the right and left sporadically, with here and there a house, telling that in former times Westport had some culture; a quiet life of sedate embroideries no doubt flourished behind finely proportioned windows of which only a few remain. About four beautiful houses remain, I said, and the car turned up a street that put the eighteenth century clean out of my mind: here at least, I said, there can have been no declension, for what I see is Ireland in essence—broken pavements with a desolating tide of children, pouring over the thresholds of almost underground dwellings. And the street ends characteristically, I added, in some shards and splinters of cottages.

We passed some school buildings where a pastor was engaged in admonishing the little flock before the lambs returned to the ewes for dinner, and the sight of him reminded me of another pastor, a few hundred yards away, in the street leading up the hill to the rectory. He, too, is anxious, I said, that there shall be no strayings; that the flock shall depart in good order and keep to the straight road.

And this opposition of Catholics and Protestants puts into my mind thoughts of Stevenson in the Cevennes and the aphorism that he so often heard on the lips of the mountaineers—it is a bad thing for a man to change. And so convinced is he of the truth of this aphorism that he repeats it in his narrative two or three times, saying that a man's religion is the poetry of the man's experience, the philosophy of the history of his life, and that a man may not vary from his faith unless he can eradicate all memory of the past, and in a strict and not conventional meaning change his mind. The glitter of the words and the sentimentality captivate the reader till he lays aside the book and begins to remember that the Cevennians

were Catholics before they were Protestants, and that before they were Catholics they were heathen—facts that disturb his enjoyment of Stevenson's style, for it would seem impossible to admire words, however prettily they may flourish, if they put forth an untruth.

In his pursuit of style Stevenson seems to have forgotten that for the enjoyment of the religious stagnation he recommends we must wait for the next world; it has never existed in this and would seem to be contrary to the conditions of our mortal life. "We cannot bathe twice in the same river," a philosopher said long ago, and his disciples added afterwards: "we cannot bathe once in the same river." Scotsmen are almost proverbially metaphysical, but a great man is an exception in his own country; were it not so Stevenson could not have failed to perceive that Protestantism and Catholicism are states of soul, the possessions of mankind rather than of any particular race or family, rising up in the same country and in the same family spontaneously and without apparent cause. Peter was a Catholic and Paul was a Protestant, and a thousand years before Peter and Paul were born there were Protestants and Catholics. So in the strict sense there is no conversion; we merely discover in our hearts what we brought into the world with us, a disposition leading us to pious practices or an inly sense of divinity.

A striking illustration of a man becoming possessed of a sudden sense of divinity is given by Stevenson in the very pages that I am criticising. Stevenson had cast his camp under some chestnut-trees where he had slept ill, the ground being full of ants; and there being no water in the garden he made his toilet in the waters of the tarn before continuing his journey through a valley, overtaking an old man, who walked beside him talking about the morning and the valley. Connaissez vous le Seigneur? the old man asked. And as if averse from giving a

direct answer Stevenson asked him what Seigneur. The peasant only repeated the question and Stevenson answered: now I understand you. Yes, I know him. He is the best of acquaintances; and delighted at this answer the old Plymouth Brother cried, striking his bosom: it makes me happy here. A truly Protestant state of feeling, so much so that the words bring a responsive thrill into the heart of every Protestant that reads them. Of this Stevenson seems to have been aware, but he does not seem to have understood that this peasant might have a son who would be more moved by the motion of a priest's finger giving him a blessing than by the spectacle of the sun-rise.

The old Plymouth Brother follows Stevenson to the inn and listens to him in admiration and delight, feeling for the first time the spiritual intimacy of which he has been long deprived, his lot having been cast in the Catholic village. There are many of us up yonder, he said, none here. Stevenson draws a comparison between his own feelings regarding this man and the feelings of the excellent friar whom he met road-making on the summits leading to the monastery, "Our Lady of the Snows." I have not got the passage before me, but I think that my memory does not betray me. Stevenson admits that with some reservations he can make common cause with the Plymouth Brother; but he finds himself aloof in the company of the friar, though he is constrained to allow that the friar is as worthy a man as the Plymouth Brother. This seems to me to be true. If a man be of a Protestant kin he is at home and at spiritual communion with all Protestant sects—Congregationalists, Quakers, Methodists and Unitarians. He is not separated from them as he is from Papists. An Agnostic, too, is at home with all Protestant sects. Whether a man stays away from church or goes to church is a matter of no importance. He may be an atheist and still feel himself

to be of the same communion as Protestants, for atheism and Protestantism rest on the same foundation—the right of private judgment. Nor can theological difference concern us Protestants very acutely, for no man knows what he believes, moral differences are more important, and it follows that if we surrender our right of private judgment we become if not immoral at least unmoral; and that is why Protestants feel themselves so strangely aloof among Catholics. Any curtailment of the body operates on the mind, and the stinted mind soon begins to put on a different complexion, as none can have failed to notice that keep cats. The Tom from next door is manifestly ill at east in the company of my Blackie, who has been to the butcher, and I have often thought that the embarrassment he feels is not unlike mine when I happened to drift into the company of Papists.

The falsetto scream that comes out of Ireland and a certain untrustworthiness in the national character may be traced back to the relinquishment of the right to private judgment; without it a man is not wholly a man, I said, and striving immediately afterwards to mitigate the thought that had come into my mind, I continued: but all is not black or white; grey is the primal colour. There are Protestant Catholics, and there are Catholic Protestants. But are there? I asked. And is grey as interesting in live animals as it is on the painter's palette? And are the all-buts more interesting than the pure neutrals?

CHAP. XIII.

THE house stands at the foot of the hill between the end of the street and the high wood, hidden behind walls, only its long low roof showing, the passenger along the foot-path getting no more than a glimpse of it through the tall gates, open only for carriages and motors, our-

selves coming and going by the wicket. A somewhat gloomy residence it must seem to him who stops before the gates, the charm and life of the house being on the other side, about a lawn shelving steeply, and rising up as steeply to the high wood. A river is heard muttering in the valley, and its banks come into view presently describing a curve so formal that our thoughts are carried back into the eighteenth century, when labour could be obtained for sixpence a day. It was then, we say, the river was deviated from its natural course to make a beautiful little domain.

A foison of briers and ash saplings has grown out of the river's walls and is pitching them stone by stone into the river, adding to its picturesqueness. And for a week, I say to myself, as I hand the carman his fare, I shall listen to the brown river bubbling past a great cedar; and when I go to the tennis ground I shall cross it by a plank bridge.

From the tennis ground the lawn slants upwards, pleasantly diversified by bunched hawthorns, casting, I say to myself as I wait on the doorstep, having rung the bell, round beautiful shadows above five o'clock in the afternoon.

About the house are tall ash-trees and beeches, and these are filled in June with young rooks trying their wings from branch to branch. If the breeze shakes the branch too violently they fall into the shrubberies, where the parent bird, who would feed them, may seek them and find them. One of the girls shoots the young rooks with a pea rifle as they swing; and this always seems to me a cruelty; for rooks are not eaten in Ireland. It may matter little to the dead birds whether they are thrown to cats or dogs, or whether they are baked in pies; but the same might be said of ourselves, that it matters little to a man whether he lies in a vault or is thrown on a

dung-hill; yet we cannot detach our hopes from vaults, wherefore then should not young rooks be prejudiced in favour of interment in pies, for it were surely more honourable to lie with hard-boiled eggs and bacon, under a dome of well-kneaded pastry, than to be dragged about a greensward by a dog—too often the fate of thoughtless young rooks, I said last year, and shall say the same this year as I sit on the shelving lawn convinced that there is nothing in this world more beautiful than the round shadows of hawthorn-trees dropping down a grassy hill-side, and of all when the grassy hill-side ascends towards a high wood.

Only in this house and on this lawn and during the June weather do I escape from literature, from secretaries, from manuscripts, from proofs, and surrender myself to an almost thoughtless idleness, and to snatches of conversations with my friends, who have too many projects of their own to attend to one who has no project outside of his dreams.

A girl rises from the breakfast-table saying she has a bicycle ride of many miles in front of her; another speaks of a fishing-party, and when the family collects about the dinner-table, one narrating the adventures of her ride, another telling how a fortnight hence she and another girl will be camping out on one of the islands in the bay, I begin to think that I should be a different George Moore if I were married. There would be a difference certainly, and a very real difference, and in this house the difference appeals to me as a subject of a story; the invention of my married self would be a real flight of the imagination, and the struggle between myself and circumstances a piece of literature. The wife I should choose for æsthetical reasons may be revealed to me in a sudden flash as I sit on the sunny lawn if the day be fine, or if it be wet, as I read in the billiard-room looking forward

to my walk through the most musical wood in the world, a river tumbling round and over the boulders, a sort of ground-base accompaniment to the songs of blackbirds and thrushes.

A river flowing through a high wood awakens our childhood, not dead but sleeping; our primal imaginations return to us—dragons, giants and elves; and so eager are we to escape from the present back into the past that we begin to feel an annoyance creep up in us as we descend the shelving lawn. The old-fashioned flowers whose names are familiar do not let us from the past, but the flowering bushes—certain pink flowers whose name is perhaps begonia—impede us, and a strange word "calceolaria," a plant or a bush, bearing some ugly yellow flower or berry, we know not which, bars our way, and imprisons us in the present. But the wood will give back our childhood to us; in this moment of crisis we remember at the bend of the river some dark spiky foliage favoured with a name so beautiful that our memory should have retained it without difficulty from one year to the next; but again it has passed out of our mind. But as soon as this dense growth is behind me, I say to myself, I shall be among forest trees, the humble cow-parsley and lowly blue-bells and the winning speedwell running in and out between the tall grasses will set me thinking once again that there is no flower that speaks as plainly as the speedwell, not even the wild geranium which I shall find higher up in the wood overhanging the stream.

As I approach the woodland I continue to enumerate the flowers I shall meet there: the speedwell will brighten my way, and I shall catch sight of rocket here and there amid the tall grasses, and peonies white and pink and purple. Rhododendrons are all through the high wood. I shall see again a tall spray of rhododendron flowering in the lonely twilight of a wooded island, maybe, and for

sure I shall walk under the pale green foliage filled with noisy rooks, talking of course, but of what? Ah! if we knew.

CHAP. XIV.

MY every step produces a clamour of wings in the greenery above me: the jackdaws have nests in the holes in the elm and their caw is softer than the rook's, and as I walk I regret not being able to take back a jackdaw to London for a pet, for no bird is more inclined to domesticity than he is, quitting his kind for our kind if he received any slight encouragement to do so.

In a moment, and without my being conscious of the departure of rooks and jackdaws, two birds that the gardener told me last year were dippers engage my attention, and I remember that the name he put upon them did not satisfy me, and how pleasurable it was to seek them out in an illustrated book and discover the almost tailless birds shapen like wrens, with white waistcoats, to be water-ousels—birds that had merely a Wordsworthian reality for me till I saw them in Westport.

It is delightful to meet in life what one is a little weary of meeting in poetry; to watch the rapid beat of their wings as they fly, resting every twenty or thirty yards upon a boulder, now and then plunging into the water, to run along the bottom in search of worms, so the book informed me, and it became a passion in me to try to verify the fact.

The birds go under water in search of food, there could be no doubt of that, since they did not seek their food on land; but the nature of the food they sought could hardly be worms; for worms do not live under water; and standing like a stock I apply myself to the observation of the birds without, however, gathering a single fact except that their flight is short and rapid like the kingfisher's; and I say to myself: to note anything

new about them I shall have to discover their nest; for they have a nest here surely, though the season is late. One only meets them on the island, if I may call it such. An island is was certainly in the mind of the eighteenth-century designer, but the channel he dug has filled up with mud, but with mud still sufficiently liquid to justify the appellation of island to a very beautiful and romantic spot protected by mud on one side and a river on the other from sight-seers beguiled to trespass by the tranquillity of these woods, and the high ruin hanging over the crest of the hill. None knows that island except the water-ousels, I say to myself as I walk thither; and birds who do not frequent trees nest in old walls.

But how beautiful are the trees in their island seclusion; and with unwearying fondness my eyes wander among the tall stems and out upon the branches, admiring the anatomy and the architecture, convinced, and my conviction is ecstatic, that in this world there is nothing so admirable as a tree, or so mysterious. Small wonder, I say, that men have worshipped them; would that I too might worship, and upon the wings of a perfervid desire of worship my thoughts melt into a thoughtless contemplation of an overhanging tree that a boy would have liked to use as a bridge, but being no longer a boy I meditate on the noble gesture, saying to myself: a fallen or falling tree humanises a wood.

The ousels have disappeared into the nest that I shall never find; and I move up the path that I may get a better view of the great white wall of an ancient mill pierced with many windows, through which the sunset will pour as the last train rattles over the viaduct on its way to Achill, emphasising the solitude of the wood as it ascends amid high rock.

It could not have been else than here, I say, that my infantile eyes would have espied dragons, giants and elves in the twilight of overhanging clefts; and who can

say they are not here still? 'Tis our former selves that have vanished; we are always losing and winning something; nothing is permanent within or without. In childhood I saw dragons, giants and elves, and now I see high trees, ivy clad, lifting themselves with lovely gesture out of a tangle of hawthorn, with the pale pink rhododendron blossom resting atop of its tall stem in the solitude of a wooded island—the same as last year. Of what have I to complain?—we only change our visions; and my philosophy is confirmed a few yards farther on by a group of laburnums venturing into the river for all the world like a group of golden-haired nymphs.

The hart's tongue and the Royal Osmunda should do well here, I say, and my eyes begin a search for the tall, pale, reed-like fern of which there is not one about, and I pause, for at that moment an otter slides into the river noiselessly; and seeing the dark animal come up with a fish in its mouth and disappear into the bank, I begin to think of the hungry cubs at the end of a hole about three feet deep, of all I had read about tame otters, and of the stiffness of the ascent up the hill-side—an ascent that a few years hence I shall undertake with some little difficulty, but which to-day is pleasant exercise.

The path leads through tall boles rising like spears, a beech wood; and soon after I find myself beset as of yore by thoughts regarding a wall some twenty feet high descending steeply into a lovely hollow and rising up again as steeply, saying to myself: a strange thought it was surely to build a wall twenty feet high through a wood: but it adds to the mystery of this little domain designed so finely by Nature, one that, *Le Nôtre* would have said, I can neither add to nor curtail.

And on coming out of the wood I find myself on a sort of terrace or terraced walk overlooking the deer park—a deer park of twenty acres! In the eighteenth century a deer park was a necessary adjunct to every gentleman's

residence, and in Ireland the eighteenth century did not end till 1870, therefore, in my boyhood, almost every residence of distinction in Mayo had a deer park—that Moore Hall should be without one was a source of shame and regret to me; and it was not infrequent for me to drop into meditations regarding a possible extension of the Stone Park. As late as the sixties there were deer in Castle Carra; and the great mass of brushwood (through which we used to wend our way with our luncheons—a picnic in the ruined castle was a pleasure looked forward to eagerly) might be purchased from Sir Robert Blosse if one of our race-horses would win a big race. And these dreams of long ago were revived by the miniature deer park of Westport Lodge—a deer park of twenty acres, in which the last stag was shot some years ago on account of his refusal to share his paddock or park with a jackass; the jackass was required for the children, and the stag was an old friend that lived on excellent terms with everybody but the jackass, what was to be done? And the perplexity the stag caused in his life did not end with his death; nobody would eat this noble and affable friend. He was given to the dogs, I believe. But away with such memories.

Above me rises a wall of great height covered with a thick green creeper, heart-shapen papery leaves forming an obscure growth at the foot of the wall, and filled with a blue flower so uninteresting that it is called periwinkle; nor does it deserve a nobler name, and only a man lacking in the finer instincts would stop to consider it on a terrace commanding so admirable a view—the wooded park descending in many beautiful shapes, and beyond its trees the roofs of the town showing against the dark sides of the Westport hills; hill after hill rising up in rugged outlines like bastions designed as if to support the almost too perfect symmetry of St. Patrick's Hill. A peak as regular as the famous volcano that the Jap-

anese painters spent their lives in the eighteenth century drawing and redrawing, and saying to each other: if we live for another fifty years we may produce a drawing that will satisfy us. But in Ireland nobody draws, and popular imagination was satisfied by the building of a tiresome church on the top of it, whither pilgrims go wearing their shoe leather away and emptying their pockets. A Whilom volcano, so it is said, in the back end of time, some five hundred thousand years maybe before the birth of man. I had once thought that with five hundred tons of dynamite the regularity of the peak might be undone, but to-day it seems to me that the peak is all right in its landscape. I would change nothing, not even the church that has been built atop of St Patrick. In God's good time the people will weary of prayers and turn to drawing, and what a vision of outlines for their pencils. On looking into the gap between the trees and the Westport hills, we see a faint blue line of dentilated hills almost lost to view in about five and twenty or thirty miles of distance, the first chain of the Connemara mountains.

CHAP. XV.

AT this moment Jim comes panting to heel, having failed to get on the trail of a rabbit.

Jim is May's dog; and I may have been guilty of an error in composition in not having introduced the reader to the lean, long-legged fox terrior who finds it at first difficult to remember me over the long interval of eleven months. He sniffs and sniffs again, his memory returning with every sniff, and at the fifth or sixth he barks, and there is no mistaking the bark; it says as plainly as words: you're the gentleman who takes me out rabbiting. And from that moment he waits and watches, and when I raise my eyes from the book I catch his eye, and after

a time I say: Jim, you've been waiting a long time, the book that I'm reading must seem very tiresome to you, let us go. At these words he utters a most joyful bark, and scampers round the billiard-table. If I put on my hat he is nearly sure he is going to be taken out, if I take the stick he is certain, and away we go in the hope of a rabbit.

There is a record, or at least a legend, of Jim having succeeded in catching a rabbit on the hill-side, but within my knowledge the triumph has always been missed, the rabbit succeeding in escaping down the gullet out of which he came from Lord Sligo's domain.

The first time that I witnessed the escape of the rabbit was about three years ago. Jim, who had brought a fine scent into the world with him, got on the trail of the rabbit at the beginning of the wood, and went away, his nose to the ground, at full gallop without posting me, as he should have done, to cut off the retreat, and being ignorant of the nature of the ground, it fell out that I stopped unhappily at some ten or a dozen yards from the gullet, instead of at the entrance of the gullet itself: ten yards higher up the hill, ten yards nearer to the gullet, I should have been able to turn a rabbit back who seemed no wise in a hurry, the dog having lost the scent, and the rabbit seemingly aware of the loss stopped, meditated a moment, and before I could intervene hopped leisurely into the little drain and passed up the gullet. The dog arrived a few seconds afterwards and began the fruitless digging. Poor Jim was disappointed, and it was with difficulty he was persuaded to renounce the task, which in his heart he must have known to be hopeless, of digging out the rabbit. On many other occasions I bade Jim to heel till I was fairly stationed at the gullet and then bade him hunt, but on all these occasions there was no rabbit. It was not till last year that a rabbit bounded out of the undergrowth with Jim after him yelping like a

Red Indian on the war-path, and I following down into the dell and up again striving to reach the gullet before the rabbit. It may be that I arrived too late and it may be that the rabbit bounded back and escaped by another gullet, all that can be said definitely is that the rabbit escaped. More than that would be surmise, conjecture.

This year as last year Jim will accompany me, but I shall not lend him my aid to catch the rabbit by standing myself at the gullet, I shall entertain the hope that the rabbit will continue to escape, for were the rabbit taken the hill-side would lose some of its wonder, some of its mystery, some of its adventure. But no such misfortune as the taking of the rabbit will befall us; the rabbit is never taken in Ireland, and let us hope that the future will be like the past, and that the history of Ireland will continue to be marked by the escape of the rabbit; for were the rabbit taken the country would sink into such stupor and lethargy as would frighten God in His high throne in Heaven.

CHAP. XVI.

ONE day in my walks in the high wood I spied a man standing on a boulder in the midst of the river, seemingly undecided whether he should jump to the next one; and knowing the pool to be deep between the boulders I tried to dissuade him.

There's no chance of drowning, he cried to me, but if I miss my step I'll be up to my belt. I called out that to cross the river he would be trespassing on private rights, but he did not heed my warning. He jumped again; and, laying hold of a protruding root, began to climb the bank, telling me as he made his way up that the master (the gentleman in whose house I was staying) would have nothing to say against the gathering of a few ferns along the river's bank.

A fern-gatherer, I said, and followed him asking questions, not so much for the answers he gave as for the pleasure it was to listen to his low, musical voice, a tenor voice, in keeping, it seemed to me, with his pale, oval face; a young man who had just passed out of his first youth; an Irish peasant, but far from the typical, I said, when I left him to his search and continued my walk through the beech wood, not able to forget his spare chestnut beard, his moustache and his comely, well-knit figure. These, so it seemed to me, I had seen before and many times, but where I had seen them I could not remember, and it was not till after long soul searching it occurred to me that I had seen him in pictures. Yes, I murmured to myself, he is the Jesus that has come down to us from the fifteenth century, imagined first perhaps by Fra Angelico, and repeated ever since by many thousands of painters, inclining more and more to the feminine and epicene type, becoming a woman in Holman Hunt's picture, *The Light of the World,* Miss Christina Rossetti, with a blonde beard and moustache. But, I continued, my fern-gatherer does not reproduce the fond emptiness of Jesus's face; he is with it all a man; and there can be no doubt that I am doing him an injustice by associating him with Holman Hunt's version of Christina Rossetti in a blonde beard. My fern-gatherer is a man and altogether himself in the life he has chosen for himself. A romantic figure, I added, one which does honour to the town of Westport.

He had already captured my imagination by dinner-time, and at first pause in the conversation, when the girls' narratives of the day's doings had ceased, I related our meeting, and learnt that legends had already begun to collect about him. His name? I asked anxiously, feeling I should be disappointed if his name were among those that one wearies of in Ireland—Higgins, Walsh, O'Connor, Murphy. That it might not be Murphy I

prayed inly. Alec Trusselby! It would be strange, indeed, I exclaimed, if legends had not begun to collect about a name like that, and begged that all that was known about him should be told to me at once. Everybody was willing to tell, and the biographical scraps uttered from different ends and sides of the dinner-table were in keeping with his name.

I learnt from one member of the family that Alec had been to America and had suffered from sunstroke, from another that he lived in the woods all the summer-time, bringing back beech and oak ferns to Westport and getting for them a fair share of money; and from another that his voice and manner were so winning that it was difficult not to be his customer, and as every customer became a patron, Alec had no cause for complaint. Even if he had he is not the kind of man that would complain, a girl suddenly interjected, and turning to her I asked: how is that? She replied that he was a very shy man who would remain silent for long intervals to break into speech suddenly like a bird. This seemed to me a good description, but I had not seen enough of Alec at that time to be able to vouch for its accuracy. A girl told me the report was that Alec had built himself a summer dwelling in a great tree, and I answered that what she said did not surprise me. Lying in his bed under the boughs, I said, he caught his style from the moody blackbird who fills the wood at dawn with his exalted lay; more likely still from the meditative thrush. But how does Alec live through the winter? I asked, and it was delightful to hear that in the winter he related stories about the firesides in the cottages, and that no one refused Alec bed and board if he could help it; Alec's company was sought for by everybody; and a suspicion was abroad that to treat him ill was to bring ill luck upon oneself. Gathering ferns in the summer and telling stories in the winter, I repeated, becoming possessed in

a moment of an absorbing interest in Alec Trusselby. Is he an Irish speaker? I asked, and heard that he was one of the best in the county of Mayo. But, a girl cried across the table, mind, if he suspects you of laughing at him he will run away at once, and don't tell him you're a Protestant, he might refuse to go into the woods with you. With a heretic? I added.

A custard pudding interrupted the conversation about Alec, but as soon as everybody had been helped it returned to him, and I learnt that the gentle winning personality that had awakened fellow-feeling in me was only one side of Alec Trusselby; there was another, and one well known to the Westport police—staunch friends of his, always ready to take his part when Alec's less reputable associates mocked him in the street after drinking his money away in the public-house, their joke being to try to grab the Murrigan, not an easy thing to do, for it never left his hand, and where the Murrigan was concerned Alec was resolute and strong.

The Murrigan? I interjected. He calls his blackthorn the Murrigan, one of the girls answered; but we don't know what the word means, whether it's an Irish word or a word invented by himself. I wonder if the police could tell me? I said. Now why should the police be bothering their heads with what Alec means when he calls his stick the Murrigan? my friend, the girls' father, blurted out; and he laughed the short, quick, intelligent laugh whereby I remember him. Haven't they enough to do to keep him out of jail? And he told a story how, returning home late one night, he had come upon Trusselby and the police—the sergeant and the constable engaged in trying to persuade Alec to return to his lodging. You see, Alec, you're free to follow them if you like: the constable has let go your arm, the sergeant was saying. But if you take my advice you'll be taking yourself and the Murrigan home like the quiet, good man

that you are, the divil a better. If they insult you again we'll let yourself and the Murrigan at them, but this time we'll be asking you to let them pass on, for to break their skulls with the Murrigan would be conferring too much honour upon them. You see, said mine host, we have all a kindly feeling for Trusselby, myself as well as the police; to keep him out of jail takes us all our time, and we haven't that much over to be ferreting out the meaning of all the talk that goes on between himself and his stick as he walks the roads. But he's not half-witted? I asked, looking round the dinner-table, preferring a general to an individual opinion, and the company was agreed that Alec could not be held to be a loon. And his stories? I asked; but none at the table had felt sufficient curiosity to ask him to tell them one. I'd give a great deal, I said, to hear Trusselby tell a story, and was warned not to offer him a great deal of money, but to wait an occasion to win his confidence. If you offer him a sovereign to tell you a story you'll frighten him; he'll begin to suspect some evil and you'll get nothing out of him. But I may not meet Trusselby again, and if I did, to the end of my visit is not a long time to win his confidence—I shall be leaving in a few days. You can stay as long as you like, my host and my hostess interjected, we would like to see you friends with Trusselby before you leave.

The next day one of the girls rushed into the room in which I was writing: Trusselby is coming down the hill, she said, and I bolted out after him. You sell ferns, don't you? I asked; he answered that he did, and I asked him to get me some. He said he would and passed on, and I returned to the house disappointed. But luck was with me, and two evenings later, returning home after dining with a friend, I met Trusselby at the river-side, whirling the Murrigan and apparently in a convivial mood. Well, Alec, I said, have you come upon the royal

or the hart's tongue in your walks? You're the gentleman I met the other day up at the old mill, aren't you? he asked. I answered that I was, and we walked on together, myself making conversation, afraid every moment that Trusselby would say: I must be wishing you good-night, sir, or I'll be locked out. But it was unlikely that Trusselby had a latchkey, it was more probable that he contemplated spending the night out, which would be no great hardship, for the night was warm and still, and were it not that a bench is a hard bed, the most home-loving and respectable man in Westport might have liked to have lain out of doors, sooner or later to be hushed to sleep by the almost inaudible sound of water rippling past and the soft cawing of sleepy rooks. A night it was that would keep anybody out of his bed till midnight at least, except, perhaps, a dry old curmudgeon. A breathless night, full of stars, and perchance stories, I said to myself, and then aloud to Alec: yes, we met up at the old mill, but you didn't find the ferns you were looking for? Is it the royal you're after? Alec asked, and I answered that that was what I had in mind, and having listened to Trusselby for some time on the rarity of the fern, I broke in with the remark that I'd never seen a finer blackthorn than the one he was carrying.

He had come upon it in a brake, he said, in a thicket that often served him as a bedroom in a summer's night when his quest for ferns had led him far from Westport. And it was one morning at sunrise that I spied her; she was no thicker that morning than one of my fingers, and I said to myself: in about three years' time that stem will be the finest in Ireland if the top be cut at once so that it may be throwing out little knots and spikes. The knots begin almost at the top, sir, and at every knot there is three spikes. You would be lost if you started counting them, just as you might be if you were to start on the stars in the skies. It was the blessing of God that I

saw the Murrigan that morning, for a year later it would have been too late to cut the top. I was only in time, and there it stayed for its three years sprouting, with three spikes coming out on every knot. You can see them, sir, all the way up. Faith, there isn't half-an-inch of the stick without its three spikes. But if somebody had gone into the brake and seen the stick before you? I asked. I had to risk that, sir, for it takes three full years for the stick to furnish, and often I didn't like going to the brake for fear a person might spy on me and be wondering what I was after and perhaps be coming in behind and find out the stick; but sure I had the luck all the time and nobody came. In three years to the day, your honour, I was down in the dingle cutting my stick, my heart filled with joy so furnished was it. Mind you, sir, the seasoning of a blackthorn isn't understood by every man, for when you've cut your stick you must season it, and the place I was living in then had a fine old chimney with a flue inside of it on which you could rest a stick, and there the Murrigan rested seasoning. After six good months I took it down and gave it a rub with an oil rag, and I'll tell you, mister, it was good for sore eyes to see the way it was coming up. Take a look at it yourself now and tell me, is there a bit of Spanish mahogany in the country is its equal for colour. To this I agreed, and asked: is that the reason you call it the Murrigan? Well, it isn't, your honour. Do you see, Murrigan means " great queen " in the Irish, and my stick here is the queen of the fair this many a day. The stick knows it too, for if I'm not at the fair off goes the Murrigan without me; I look round in the morning, but not a stick can I see, so I say: the Murrigan's gone, and she'll be breaking the head of some poor chap out of sheer light-heartedness and divilment. That's the way it does be, sir, for after she's gone there's somebody has a cracked head somewhere. No one knows who breaks

it, barring the Murrigan, and she tells nobody, but just flies back unbeknownst to anybody, and finds her old place in the corner just as any creature would. And there I find her, waiting for me. Have a look at the Murrigan, sir, for you'll never see another like her. She's as beautifully ornamented as the Brooch of Tara itself, and she has the finest colour in Ireland or out of Ireland.

Faith and troth I never did. So the Murrigan goes to the fair by herself?

She does so, your honour, and she flies round the heads of the people, urging them on the way the old Murrigan used to do when Brian Boru was in it, waking up the spirit of fight in them. The Murrigan whirls like an eagle over the heads of the people, prodding them here and poking them there, and putting them at each other. When I am there, and the Murrigan with me, I feel my hand rise up and my head is that elated I don't know whether it's me or the Murrigan is doing the deeds, and I don't know if the stars that are in my head aren't thicker and twice as thick than they are in the sky. All I can see is the Murrigan about me and she whirling like a bird, but never leaving me five fingers; a faithful thing the Murrigan, bless her soul, and she saved my life many a time, good luck to her!

Trusselby kissed his blackthorn and we leaned our backs against the parapet of the bridge, looking up into the sky, the town asleep, nothing to be heard about us but the ripple of the river. Trusselby seemed to have forgotten me, and I wondered of what he could be thinking, of some battle long ago, I thought, in which doubtless the Murrigan played a great part, and seeing a smile playing over his bland, almost holy face, I said: there used to be great fighting long ago? It was about fighting I was thinking, your honour, a great fair at Castlebar, when there were more two-year-olds than three-year-olds about.

To check the story that was on his lips with a question would have been fatal, so I held my peace, hoping to learn whether the fair was lacking in two-year-old bullocks or two-year-old colts and fillies.

He began again after a pause. You see, sir, in the old times when your ancestors were in it, God rest their souls, in the days of your grandfather, there was an O'Brien sold a heifer to a Fitzgerald for a two-year-old, but the heifer itself was a three-year-old; and the next fair day there was a fight between Fitzgerald and O'Brien; and at the next fair the Fitzgerald brothers and the O'Brien brothers were fighting; and the fair day after that the cousins were in the fight, and after the cousins the friends came in on one side and the other, until it was a dangerous thing to hold any fair in the country at all, so great was the fighting; after whacking with all the blackthorns in the country over all the skulls in the country for more than fifty years the war finished, and it was only at the heel of the hunt that I strolled in one fair day to Castlebar. There was a man there, and somebody made a cake of his skull with a tap of a stick. Nobody knew who did it. He said it was the policeman, and he took out a summons against the policeman. Well, I was a witness in the case, your honour, and I couldn't see an innocent man condemned even if he was a peeler itself. When I came before the magistrate he asked if I was standing by at the time. I was, your Worship, says I; and he says: was it the policeman broke the man's head? and I said: it was not, your Worship; the policeman didn't hit the man that tap. A tap, you call it, said the man, Michael Joyce was his name, and he lifted up the bloody bandage that was upon his brow. 'Tis more than a tap, your Worship, says I, it's a clout; but tap or clout, it wasn't the policeman gave it to him. You're on your oath, Alec Trusselby, he said. And I said: before God? and I gave a swear that it wasn't the policeman. Now

who do you think but the magistrate was looking into Joyce's face, and he saw three little weeney holes around his eye, and he took notice of them three little holes, and when I picked up the Murrigan and was going out of the box he said: let me have a look at your stick, Trusselby, so I gave it to him, and he said: wasn't it you gave the man the tap? And I said: it was so, your Worship. Tell me, says he, why did you strike that blow? So I ups and I told him the story of the two-year-olds and the three-year-olds. Which was he, said the magistrate, was he a two-year-old or a three-year-old? Your Worship, says I, he was like myself, he was a two-year-old. And why did you assault and batter the man? Well, you see, your Worship, says I, there was only a few of us in that fair. We was outnumbered altogether by the three-year-olds, and Joyce yonder was saying he'd like well to see the man who'd tread on the tail of his coat, and seeing that there would be a fight in which we might be worsted I just gave him a tap to make him quiet like, and to keep him out of harm's way.

So that's the story of the Murrigan? It is, your honour, I've told you the whole of it. A wonderful stick she is; look at her; every knob with three little spikes like the blessed shamrock that St. Patrick picked so that he would be able to explain the Holy Trinity to the pagans. A beautiful stick, I said, and a very interesting story. You know many stories, Alec, and can tell them better than any man now living. It's puffing me up with pride and goster you'd be, your honour, and after reminding him that he had promised to bring me some beech and oak ferns we parted, myself regretting that my shyness had prevented me from asking Alec to tell me a story. The night is fine, I said, and he was in the humour; he wouldn't have refused, but I've missed my chance unless I fortune to meet him again before leaving Westport.

It was two days afterwards that I met Trusselby speed-

ing down the road from the woods, his hands full of ferns, and accosting him with a pleasant good-morning and a reference to our talk by the bridge under the elm-trees I invited him to come up to the high wood with me. You may have overlooked some ferns, I said. He did not answer, but his eyes said plainly enough that he didn't believe he had overlooked any. Well, come with me, I said. If we find some ferns so much the better, if we don't I'll reward you for your afternoon all the same. Well, if it will please your honour, I'll come up with you. We found no ferns, but, as if to compensate me for my factitious disappointment, Alec proposed to go to Ilanaidi to search for the royal, and, after visting all the moist banks and hollows of the town-land, we returned with some fine specimens of beech and oak ferns, some specimens of the hart's tongue—a beautiful tall fern flowing out like a ribbon, Alec's own description of it—and in our hearts the hope that on another day we might be more fortunate and come upon the royal. And to the gate of my friend's house Alec continued to assure me that it had been heard of between Ilanaidi and Castlebar. At the wicket I gave him to understand that I was ready when he was for a day in the woods and fields. Till to-morrow, were my last words to him, and as soon as they were spoken my face changed expression, for Ilanaidi was four or five miles from Westport, and there and back would be a long way for a man of letters.

CHAP. XVII.

DID Alec tell you any stories? my friend asked, and his short, ironical laugh jarred a little. No; I heard no stories, but patience is the virtue of the folk-lorist. You don't mean that you're going for another tramp with Alec? Yes, we start to-morrow at nine. Well, you're an extraordinary fellow, my host said. Every man is extraor-

dinary to his fellow, I answered; our quests are different; and the next day I went forth again, to return with an increased knowledge of ferns but without any stories. Indeed, I had almost begun to believe that a joke was being put upon me. It was often on my tongue to say: in the winter evenings I suppose you tell stories in the cottages but I had restrained myself, and it is not unlikely that it was to break through my studied reserve that he began to speak, some days later, of Liadin and Curithir, saying they used to meet by the druid stone under which we were now sitting eating the food we had brought with us. And who may they be? I asked. You don't read their names in the stories that are going round about old Ireland, he answered, but 'tis many and many's the time I've heard my father say that there wasn't the like of that pair for the making of poems.

The names seemed to kindle a new personality in him. The lantern is lighted, I said; we shall see whither it leads us.

In the years back, he continued, it was a favourite story with the people, but they don't care much about it here. It is out of their minds now like the rest of the old shanachies, and all they have a taste for is the yarns they do be reading in the newspapers and the like; stuff without any diet in them. They are not like the story I'm talking of, the story of Liadin and Curithir. But I would be wearying your honour with it. You might not be caring for old stories. There's nothing to my mind better than an old story, I answered. The birds are singing overhead; the time is for story-telling; go on, Alec.

CHAP. XVIII.

WELL, since your honour is so pleasant I'll tell it. At the first going off, let you know that Liadin and Curithir were two great poets, as great as any that ever went the

round in Ireland, though there has been more talk about others than about them. Usheen was the biggest of the lot, and I'm not comparing Liadin and Curithir to himself. All the same Curithir was a fine poet and Liadin wasn't far behind him for the telling of stories and the singing of songs in the courts of the kings, and the like, where they'd all be clamouring and shouting for her at the end of their feasts. She was from Corkaguiney, or, as they call it now, the County Cork, and she was on her way there when she met Curithir, who was on his rounds to the west and would be going north shortly with his thousand stories, for he had a stiffer memory than Liadin's, although his songs weren't as soothing to men after drinking a gallon or more of ale. A gallon was nothing to people in those days! And so it was with these two that I am telling your honour about, and they sharing the glory of Ireland between them.

Every spring of the year they would be passing this stone, beside which your honour is lying, as they were bound to go, it being the mereing. And every time they passed it Liadin said to herself: Curithir knows more poems than I do but my own songs are sweeter than Curithir's. And every time Curithir passed it he said: many's the time I've gone by here thinking to meet Liadin, whose songs make game men of all men, though what they be at is love or war, strutting and striving to outdo one and t'other, trailing their coats like a cock his wing. She passes this way every year like I do myself, Curithir said; and we always missing each other as if it was the will of God. And while he was thinking away like I'm telling you, a feeling came over him that it would be well for him to bide his time, it being about the season that she would be on her way to the south. Nor had he long to wait, for before the light was gone he saw two women coming through the dusk, and he knew them to be Liadin and her tiring

woman, for no one else would be wandering through a lonesome place at nightfall, unless it was herdsmen that were come to bring the cows home for the milk to be drawn out of them. Isn't it true, says Curithir, to himself, she is coming to touch this stone like everybody that travels north or south? but though he said to himself —it is she—he wasn't sure that it was, and his heart was fluttering as if it would burst his breast open and lay him stiff before her. With every step she took the cold sweat was starting on his forehead, and his face was gone as pale as the grass beyond will be in the heel of the year; and then, as she came nearer, and the sight of her face became plain, a great swimming came behind his eyes and he might have fallen, she was that beautiful. He said: her body is like a first night's snow, her hair is curly as the wool on a ram's head, her lips are red as the rowan berry, and her voice is sweet and low like the wind whispering among the reeds when the summer is coming in.

At last I am looking at yourself, Curithir, and it is not too soon that I set my eyes on you, for every spring-time, a day, or at the most a week, has been coming between our two bodies and our two souls. Faith, Liadin of the songs, I've been thinking that myself, and it was a good thought bade me a while back to wait here where I am lest you might be passing. Do you hear that, Lomna Druth and Curithir asked, turning from Liadin to his dwarf who was cocked up on the druid stone with the poet's singing robe in a purple bag lying beside him. I've half a mind to leave you cocked up there, so that you may be breaking one of your little legs trying to climb down, or if there be no heart in you to dare to climb down, to die up there, and you howling for a bite or a sup and none coming. But my happiness is so great now that I'll even forgive you for urging me to my journey and making me miss her for whom I've been waiting for this long time,

and who is before us now. He would have said more than that to Lomna Druth, for he was angry at the thought that he had been near to missing Liadin again. But at the sight of her there was no more thought in him for Lomna Druth, and turning from the ugly little fellow he stood gazing and gaping at the beautiful woman before him without a word to say to her, for his throat was like a lime-kiln and hers was hardly any better. A spell seemed to be on the two of them, caused by the long waiting and by the spring of the year. At last she got out the words: Brigit, my tiring woman, was to sleep here by this stone. But if you and the Lomna Druth have chosen this place for your bed we would not be—— Faith, said Curithir, wouldn't it be the poor thing if we could not spend one night listening to the stories that every person in Ireland has heard but our two selves alone.

But not a story, nor the beginning of a story, could either tell the other, so great was the longing and the uneasiness and the torment that was in them. While they were that way the Lomna Druth was snoring away like a stuck pig, with his mouth wide open, and the moon staring down his gullet; nor was Brigit far behind him, and the noise them two were making with their snores and their snorts put all the stories out of Curithir's head so that he could not remember one of them at all and was stumbling and forgetting himself until Liadin took pity on him. So she said: let us leave these people where they are and we will go and look out for a quiet place in the wood where we can talk. He knew what was in her mind, and got on his feet, and she came after him saying: I cannot go with you, and he answering: you can, you can, indeed, overcoming her with the story of a place where the grass was thick under the larches: where, he said, we shall be missing the droppings of the rooks, for they have their nests higher up on the hill-side. So cosening was his talk she could not say no to him, and that night

they lay with their lips seeking each other's always, his hand never wearying of the shape of her body, nor his eyes wearying either, for the moon shining through the tasselled branches gave light enough for him to enjoy her with his eyes. So he not wearying and she nothing loth spent the night together, taking their joy of each other until the rooks began to clatter out of the high wood and went away one by one and two by two down the valley filled with mist for all the world like a lake. No person, he said, looking from her, would know the mist from a lake that had come in the night to divide us, and she said: a lake come to divide us! And he answered her reproof: no, we're together for as long as this flesh lasts. On speaking these words there came a piercing in him with the knowledge that he would lose Liadin. How he would lose her he did not know; but there was fear in him that he would lose her surely. It was in her too, but being a woman she kept the thought to herself.

My Brigit and your Lomna Druth, she said, will come this way searching for us; it would be as well that we should go to them instead. It would be as well indeed, he replied angrily, but I wish all the same that the warning had not come from you, and without saying any more they went back in search of their servants. Curithir, guessing Liadin's thoughts, said: from this day our life will be lonesome for us two, and not one of us knows how we lived our lives up to this day, and we not seeing each other every day and every night; so hazy is it all that I do believe it was but a dream that a reality broke last night. I'm feeling like that myself, she said, but I would have you make your meaning plainer to me. Says he: is it not plain enough what I say that you are the greatest poetess Ireland has ever known and I am the greatest poet; let us go off together for good and all, and we will have a son to our name who'll be greater than the two of us. I like well, she answered, that you should be

thinking such things, but if I said yes to that all my trysts would be broken and your trysts too, and you have many of them in the north and I elsewhere. We have to keep our bonds with the people in whose houses we've eaten and whose presents we've taken. And this seeming to Curithir well spoken, he kicked his dwarf out of slumber and said: come, follow me; the day has begun and our way is northward. With the same words but without the kick Liadin awoke Brigit: put the harp on your back and sling the bag with my singing robes over your arm and be after me quickly, for there's a long road in front of us. Brigit did as she was bid and was soon ahead of her mistress, whose thoughts were not on the road before her but back in the pleasant covert where so much delight had come to her. And every step she took away from the place the nearer it was to her, so that to get rid of the languish that was interfering with her journey she began a cronan and a singing to herself, and it was the way that the words and the tune came unknown to her, word for word and note by note, so that she wondered. The like of this never happened to me before, she murmured, though the verses usually came easily to me; nor was the first stretch of the road they were going done with when lo! and behold you! a second and a third song came to her and she not looking for them or thinking about them at all! Other things she was thinking of. Mistress, you'll be making the king wait for the new songs you promised last year. But to Brigit's screechings Liadin gave no heed. She continued in her thoughts until they arrived at the Court, where there was a great gathering to meet her. It was proud she was that time, and when she took up the harp from Brigit she made a song about love under the larches the way that everyone who heard her that night was troubled under their robes and stood gaping and gazing, every man looking at every other man's wife and every woman with her eyes at

another woman's husband. Wherever she went it was the same story, from king to serving boy, men were stabbing each other in the streets, and women tearing each other's hair in the parlours, with Liadin standing by unconcerned about the mischief she was making; rejoicing maybe in the bottom of her heart, for she was wild and raging wild that she hadn't had a second night with Curithir under the larches. A year is a long time, said she, but if I kissed another man that would spoil it all, and as soon as any man tried to put a hand on her she out with a knife on him. Let you be listening to my songs, she would say, and let you be off and do the same thing underneath the larches, but let me be, for in this world everyone keeps to their own people, the kings with the queens, the poets with the poetesses, and so on that way.

The kissing and the strife continued until the priest hearing that bad work was being done in the courts said: Ireland will go back to the devil and the druids if we don't put a stop to that one, and from that day out they gave her neither peace nor ease, but kept on talking to her, and preaching to her and barking at her about her soul that would be lasting always, and about the wasting of the flesh and the wasting of all things in the world. It was the truth they were telling her, and she did well to listen to them, for who have we but the clergy to come to us when we're on the broad of our back, on the last day, with oil to rub on our feet, and strong prayers for the resting of our souls? The time will come to you, Liadin, said the priests, when your voice will be no better than the screeching of gravel under a door, and your fine hair will be no better than seaweed, and it lank and stinking; and your teeth, if they are little itself and like the snowdrops this day, will one day be lengthy and yellow, and after that maybe there won't be a tooth in your head at all. And not a day but will see the vanishing of a bit of your beauty until there is none left, said the priest.

It's that way and with them arguments they talked to her, and there was no stopping them once they began; and then you will be thinking, Liadin, of the fair hair, about the mischief you did in Erin and in the world, and about your wantoning in the dry ditches in the summer nights, and the fighting and battling you set going up and down the streets of the five provinces. Repent while you've got the chance, said they, or it'll be the worse for you. What would you have me do? said she. Is it to be hanging up my harp on a nail at the back of a door, and leaving it there? she asked them. And they said: it wasn't that, but to put a good tune on the harp and to make songs about the love of God and the glory of the holy saints and angels: that, said themselves, is what we'd have you do. But if the sort of songs you like do not come into my mind, what way will I be singing them and I thinking of other things? she asked. And that was her gait all the time, till one day a great man, Fergus by name, took his death-blow with a bill-hook in a dispute and a quarrel with another man about her singing.

It was after that she began to listen to the priest: it's a filthy, bad, black passion is in yourself, and all for another singer, a wanderer and a story-teller of your own kidney. The children you'll get that way wouldn't be saints at all but little devils, and the sins they commit will be added to your own ones for the punishment. And so they kept at her until they got the girl frightened. What would I be doing to escape the punishment? she asked, and the words warmed the priest's heart, for he knew that he'd got her tight. There is only the one, he said, and that's the vow. And she, being shook in her mind and tormented, took a vow to break with Curithir, but not content with that, the priest would have had a promise from her not to as much as see him. But she stood up to the priest at that, saying: if I have pledged a vow to meet him at the druid's stone I must keep my vow to him, and no

amount of talking out of the priest could get it into her head that one vow wasn't as good as another. The priest promised that grace would come to her in a convent. But who will be getting me out of the convent when once I am inside of it? she asked, and the priest wasn't able to answer that question, so she said: no, I'll not go into a convent until I have seen Curithir, and she stuck to that. The priest in his turn answered her stiff enough that if she didn't take the pledge to see Curithir no more she would be clapt into a convent with her will or without her will; so she took the pledge of the priest with a " bad cess to you " in her heart all the while she was pledging herself not to keep her tryst, saying to herself: a vow that is put on a person by force is no vow at all, which is true enough, God knows. But a vow is for ever getting its grip on you like a growing disease and you're tied up well before it's done with.

Not long after that Liadin hung her harp up on the nail. And the king himself couldn't get a song out of her, no matter how much he gave. As silent as them old rocks she was in the king's hall, but when she was alone she could be heard crooning away to herself one of the old songs. She never got to the end of any one of them, for she would start a prayer in the middle of the song, and not being able to go on with the prayer either, the tears would come rolling down her cheeks. That's the way it was with Liadin, and it was no better with Curithir. His mind was wrapped up and lost in the whiteness of Liadin's body, and that was, as I've just told you, as white and whiter than a first night's snow, and a smile would come to his lips when he remembered the red of her lips that put him in mind of the rowan berry he had seen hanging over Cummins' cell. Cummins, I must tell you, was a hermit, and he lived that time in an island on Lake Carra, no distance from Ballintubber. You know it well, your honour. As if these thoughts of Liadin were not

enough, there was the track of her teeth in his neck, for she had bitten him and drew blood from him in the way he would never forget her in his wanderings. The wound was sore enough, and many's the time his hand went to it, and the thought was never far away that she had rubbed some colour into it that could not be taken out no matter how many times he might wash himself in the River Shannon or any other river. He was glad of the track of her teeth in his neck, and whenever he came to a pool he stopped to admire it, saying: for all the money in the world I would not give up these tracks of her love for me. But misfortune often goes foot by foot with fortune, and while he was thinking so much about Liadin he forgot about his stories, and as he walked the road he was always striving to catch up with them and they always fleeing before him the way the clouds fly before the wind; sometimes he thought he had gotten them again, but when he stood up to tell them there was nothing in his head but herself and nothing before his eyes, neither the king nor his court, but Liadin's face only.

The king in whose court he was, knowing nothing of these things, cried to his servants to put Curithir out of the gate, and Curithir let them do this just as a child might, often enough not knowing what they were doing to him, so taken up was he with his memories of Liadin. And when the gate was shut behind him he didn't look back but kept on walking the road, not minding what the world was saying: the great poet, Curithir, is without a story in his head, and the Lomna Druth, his dwarf, tells tales for him. He travelled ahead, wrapped up in his dreams, to the next king's court; but when he stood up in the hall before the people it was the same thing as before, he could only gaze and gape about him, and when the king said: we're tired of waiting for your story, Curithir answered: I cannot remember any story. If you've no

stories to tell us, you've no business here. Put him out of the gates. As the servants were catching hold of him Curithir said: I could tell a story to you and it would be better than all the stories I've told you before this. Tell your tale, said the king. By my faith and my troth I cannot do that until I've seen Liadin. Liadin of the songs! the king answered, and Curithir said it could be no one else, and that he was waiting for the springtime to see her again.

The man is a fool, said the servants; there isn't a story in his head. What was it that happened to you, Curithir, tell us that now? The greatest luck, said he, that ever happened to a man. And he went his way cheerfully, though he had nothing in the wide world, barring the memory of a night he had spent with Liadin under the boughs, and the hope in his heart that he might spend another one with her in the same place, which was a poor enough life for any man living on alms and whatever he could find. It was fairly easy while the summer lasted; it wasn't so easy when the summer wasted into autumn; and it was hard enough when autumn dwindled into the cold weather. But Curithir knew neither time nor season until the season of love came round again, and he could say to himself: here is the month coming when I'll see again Liadin of the beauties. And down he knelt, and he prayed that God would put the stories that he had forgotten back into his head so that he might earn enough to dress himself and be decent when he would meet her. But sure God took no notice of him, why would he indeed? and he could remember nothing but Liadin, and he kept on walking ahead, not seeing a thing in the world but springtime only. There wasn't a green branch he passed but it put him in mind of the love night that awaited him, and every bird reminded him of the same thing. He crossed from Sligo into Mayo, praying that his waiting for Liadin at the druid stone might not be long, and in

Mayo his heart gave a jump and a leap, for there she was at the druid stone, and by herself, without even the servant Brigit.

She got there before me, so much does she love me, he said, stretching out his arms towards her, and he thinking, the poor man, that she would run into them. Great was his grief indeed when, instead of running to meet him, she put the druid's stone between them, and kept it there while she told him, across it, all that had befallen her and how things were. Is it a dream I'm dreaming, or am I hag-ridden? he said, and will you awaken me now, unless, indeed, I'm to die where I am and as I am? God help me, Curithir, she said, I've taken a pledge to break with you entirely. I was hard put to it to come here this day at all, and me badgered and tormented and cross-hackled the way I was. Will you hear the story of my escape from the priests? From the priests! he said, and with that he bent his face down into his hands, with nothing coming from him but now and then a moan or a groan, or a hard curse belike, while Liadin told her own story and all about the way she escaped from the priests of Corkaguiney. All that, he said, doesn't matter, and nothing matters since we are to be parted, bad luck to the ones that hate the poets, said he, and it only hardened his heart against the priests to hear her tell that Mary's own son had suffered on a cross to save the souls of men and women. All he could do was to moan out: the only soul I have is my love of you, Liadin, and the only soul you have is your love of me.

Wicked words, indeed, your honour; but the man wasn't in his mind at the time, so he could only think of the minute he had and couldn't think at all about the eternity that was ahead of him. If you tell me any more, he said, I shall be like a tree knocked down by a big wind. Aren't all my roots snapping under me? And such is my torment that I cannot listen any longer to that kind of talk.

Hold your tongue, Liadin, I tell you now, and let you be saying that you'll come after me into the forest, and stay with me there, where neither priest nor Protestant can find us, but only the squirrels and the forest cats and the small kind birds. Let you hear me out, Curithir, she replied. Didn't they take the pledge from you under a threat? he asked, and she answered: They did indeed, and they said they would put me into a nunnery, and lock me in it unless I took the pledge; and God knows it was hard to get away from them to meet you here. But a pledge is a pledge. What are you telling me? he interrupted. Is it that we're not going to lie together under the boughs of that larch-tree? Is it to me, with the mark of your bite, and the track of your teeth on my shoulder, that you're telling these things? And with that he commenced to cry, the creature. All that we done under the larches is done, said Liadin, for it would be flying in God's face to break a vow we have given to him. At this Curithir burst out again, and the tears dropped down on to his cloak until it was as wet as if it had been dragged in the river. Wringing wet I am with the tears you've drawn out of my eyes, but no matter the tears, and he continued like that until she came around the other side of the druid's stone to try and comfort him, and took his hand, saying they might be marching a bit of the road together. The time hasn't come for parting yet, were her words, and it was hand in hand like that they marched on, till Curithir said: we are leaving the larch-tree behind us. Let the pair of us turn now, and go back to the larch-tree. I'll not do that, said she; and, tell me now, said she, is there a man on the top of the earth would break a vow was made to God? Said he, if I take you to a holy man, and a very holy man, will you be minded by him, and will you do as he bids you? I will, in troth. Well, then, there's a man on an island in Lough Carra, a holy man surely, for he has lived on that island by him-

self these fifty years. Cummins, son of Fiachna, is his name. Let us go to him now, for what better thing could the young people do than go to the old people in their trouble? Fine, the island that man lives on, not a prettier one in Ireland, with birds and beasts flying and skipping in the glades, waiting for the holy man, and they following him from his cell to his chapel as if they were his children; which they may be, for as everything that lives, the flying and the crawling and those that walk on four legs, and those that walk on two, are children of the God that made them.

Come, do not delay any longer, Liadin, for our trouble is a bad trouble, and if there's a man in Ireland can cure us and help us that man is Cummins Mac Fiachna. Let us be off now. The walk will not be long passing by, for it's but seven miles from here to the Abbey of Ballintubber, which was built by Roderick of Connaught, as you know well. And Cummins' island is opposite the shore of Carn, the great wood; you must have heard tell of it, for the same place had a bad name for wolves. Come now with me and we'll be beside the lake, calling for Cummins to fetch us in his boat, before the sun goes down behind the Partry mountains. And so sweet was Curithir's talk that Liadin could do no less than follow him, although in her heart she knew all the time she was doing wrong. Sooner than she expected, they were passing by the skirts of the great wood and going down the hill-side and holloing across the lake for Cummins. He didn't keep them waiting. Only three times had they to shout before a boat was put out from the island, and Cummins, though he was then past seventy, could pull a good stroke as well as another, and in five minutes or less he was taking Liadin and Curithir into his boat and reading in their faces that theirs was a bad case of love. He was not minded to ask them any questions yet, but rowed on steadily till his boat was by the little quay that

he had built for it. You seem in great trouble, my poor friends, he said; and they answered that that was their case, and sitting by the door of his cabin, the two of them began talking together.

Let one of you tell the story. And which shall it be? the hermit asked. Let Liadin tell it, Curithir answered, and Cummins said: I would sooner hear it from her, though I wouldn't be doubting your word either, Curithir. All the same Curithir was not pleased with Liadin's telling of the story; he thought he could have done it better himself, but he let her go on with it right to the heel, and then he went on his knees before Cummins, saying: is there no power on earth to take away the vow she entered into against her own free will? I say there is and that you are the man to do it. Rise to your feet, my son, Cummins said, and listen to what I'm going to tell you, and if you search your own heart you will find that I am not telling a lie nor making a mistake. We have no thought that you would be lying to us. Well, my son, not lying, perhaps, but making more of the thing than it really is. Well, I will not be doing that either, but just telling you the simple truth, which is, that from our childhood all things are passing away from us. The thoughts of our childhood die, and thoughts of boyhood enter into us; these die themselves and the thoughts of manhood get their grip; and these die after having their time. Our possessions and our health pass away from us; all things pass away from us except one thing only, for everything goes away except the love of God. Everyone comes back to the love of God just as you yourselves have done. You have come back to God with tears, with sighs, and laments about things that would leave you if you did not leave them. This leave-taking is a harder thing for the man than it is for the woman, Mac Fiachna said, for he was great at reading faces. And another word to yourself, Curithir; the bond she has entered into

may lie sore upon her this day, but it will be easier on her to-morrow. Curithir looked to Liadin, thinking that she would say no to the hermit; but she stood saying nothing, her eyes cast down as if she was ashamed. You see, my son, how she stands, her eyes turned away from you and she in fear of temptation. No, Liadin cried. All you have spoken may be the truth, but that is not the truth. I do not fear temptation.

Let that be as it will be, said Cummins, I'm going to put you to the test this day, and you will see by morning that the love you think is part of yourself, and is going to last forever and ever, and beyond this world and through all eternity, is held to your senses the way a tree is tied to its roots, and as the tree's roots loosen so your senses will loosen; take one of these senses away and some part of your love goes off with it. You think this is not so; well, we shall see. Which of our senses will you take from us? said Curithir, and the hermit answered: I will put that question to you—which will you choose now: to see each other and not to speak, or to speak and not see each other?

Liadin and Curithir were of the one mind about that, and they said it was better to see each other and not to speak than to speak and not to see each other. The choice being that way, the hermit brought them to a hut that was cut into two rooms with a window in the middle, so that they could look in at each other. He hung a lamp in each room the way they would have light to see by, and he left his altar-boy with them to see that they did not talk. Inside of five minutes they had feasted their eyes enough, and turning away from the window each cried: it is a tiresome thing and a silly thing to be gazing and not saying a word. Five minutes, am I saying? Three was more like the time that they took pleasure in each other's shapes. In three minutes they were as weary as a fish taken out of the lake might be, and he waggling

at the bottom of a boat. And looking at each other, their eyes said plainly: eyes are no good unless we may be telling what our eyes see. But they could not do this, for they had given a pledge and a vow to Cummins that they would not speak, and the altar-boy was there into the bargain. The last words they heard before the door was shut on them was the hermit telling the boy that if he closed as much as one eye he would know about it, and be made to feel his fault with a cudgel cut from the hazel copse in front of Cummins' cell. Out of fear of the stick, not an eye did that boy close for the livelong night, and in the morning the three of them were worn out with watching; and when the hermit came to unlock the door the words he heard were: father, our choice was a bad one; we should have chosen to speak and not to see. Now is that so? said the hermit. You will have that test to-night, and as the pair of you have such a wish to be talking together, I'll give you, Curithir, this side of the island to regale your eyes with, and Liadin she shall have the other, and you must pledge your word to me that you will keep the trees between you both, and that there shall be no whispering through the branches. You'll have plenty of that to-night; keep your talk for the dark hours and your eyes for the light. You see, your honour, Church Island, the name it is known by to-day, is the largest island on Lake Carra, and it has about ten acres, maybe a dozen, and among the trees are tall rowans and ash and some beeches. I know the island from my boyhood, I interrupted; but go on with your story. Well, your honour, I have come to the most interesting part of it. I wouldn't be too hard upon you, Cummins said; you won't be the whole day without seeing one another. At Mass you may meet again, for I'll offer up prayers to preserve you from temptation this night that is to come, and all other nights, if you like it. My Mass will be in two hours from now, and, until then, I

shall be praying for you both and praying for myself and for the rest of the world, for it is the world needs our prayers to save it from God's anger, he being distressed at the wickedness that is going on among you from year's end to year's end.

Listen, both of you, now, to what I am saying. For the next two hours I'll be saying my prayers, and after that I'll be reading the Mass that you are to hear in the chapel, and after that I'll be in my cell, beautifying the scrolls, the missal I am painting, my present to the Abbot of Ballintubber, to whose kindness I am indebted for this comfortable island. I cannot be away from my work an afternoon if I would finish it this year; and while I am at work, weaving garlands and finding nooks and corners for the birds and the weasels and the squirrels and badgers and the foxes of my little domain, my cat will be watching for mice as patient as myself. I am telling you this, for I wish you both to imitate me and my cat, each on different sides of the island.

It's a hard test and a cruel one you're putting us to this day, said Curithir, for we are two young people and you are an old man. That is true, Cummins answered him. The old forget a great deal of youth's needs and feelings, and it is truer still that the young know nothing at all of what the old people are thinking. You see, Curithir, Liadin makes no complaint, and he asked Curithir why he didn't take example by her, but the tears were flowing down Curithir's cheeks one after the other as rain falls from the eaves, and there was no voice in him, so thick were his sighs. Away with you now, the hermit cried, and let each keep to his and her side of the island, and any transgressions will be reported to me by my little altar-boys. As he said these words Cummins fixed his eyes upon them, and the sight of Liadin's calm and contrite looks satisfied him that the bond would not be broken by her; and he pitied Curithir, for he knew what was

passing in Curithir's heart better than he did what was passing in the woman's, being a man himself, and he said: life is bitter to him now but the bitterness will pass and what was once bitter will become sweet, but if I let them go their gait what was once sweet will turn to worse bitterness. And Curithir, who understood the hermit's mind, kept saying to himself, as he walked by the lake shore: 'tis the old that make life bitter for the young, and they make it betimes so bitter that the young would escape from them through death's door. But there was no courage in him to divide himself from Liadin, which wasn't the same with Liadin, whom Curithir could see between the trees betimes sitting on a rock, looking across the lake. Thinking of what? he asked himself, but he dared not call out to her for fear the little boys might hear and tell on him. Will she have the courage to drown herself, which I haven't to-day, though talking with Liadin without seeing her may be no better enjoyment than feasting my eyes on her without speaking; and he wished the lake would rise up and carry them away, for living, he said, is bitter as a sloe, and he cast one out of his mouth. Will this day never end? he asked; and, moaning, walked the shore, till at last the hermit's bell summoned them to his cell.

So, the hermit said, you have chosen to speak but not to see each other? And he drew a curtain across the window and left them with the altar-boy, who was told to report if either peeped from behind the curtain. But without sight of each other they wearied of talking almost as soon, but not quite as soon, as they had wearied of gazing at each other. They wearied all the same, and though now and again they woke up from a doze and began talking again they were as unhappy the second day as they were the first.

Lad, the hermit said, have you waked or slept? And the lad answered: I may have dozed a bit, Father, but

should have heard them, and the hermit looked at the curtain, and seeing it as he had left it, said: now, my children, tell me, isn't human love, as I said it was, different in this from the love of God, that we can love God without the sight of his face or the sound of his voice? And Curithir, answering Cummins, said he would not endure another night of talking without sight or sight without talking. And is it the same with you, my daughter? the hermit asked. But Liadin did not answer him, and he said: praise be to the great God, she has passed beyond temptation already. She has thrown the tempter out of herself, and you must strive, my son, to do likewise. Tell me, the hermit continued, turning to the woman, is it the way I've said? and she answered: it is just as you have said. I could bear a harder test than the one you gave us; I could indeed, and I could lie without sin beside Curithir there from dusk to dusk. Without temptation rising up within you? the hermit asked. Without any temptation that I could not throw out easily. Liadin, Liadin, that such words should have come from you, Curithir cried, turning his face aside, and her cruel talk brought such tears to his eyes that the hermit was sorry for him. You would be putting a great test upon yourself, my daughter, for the flesh is strong in the night-time and the spirit weakens towards morning. But to know if you speak truly, and have put temptation well away, I'll let you lie with Curithir. Curithir covered his face with his hands to keep the hermit from seeing his joy. The hermit's eyes were upon Liadin, and he said: I wouldn't put you in doubt of danger, my child, but I'll do this to give you a chance of earning greater glory by holding out, and for that reason, and to give you good help, I'll make my altar-boy sleep between you. On hearing these words Curithir's happiness turned to as great sorrow, and he was near running to the lake to drown himself, but, catching sight of Liadin's face, he held his breath. Was

this a trick of hers? he asked himself. Had she a spell to put on the boy so that he would sleep like a top, and would neither see nor hear them, and they crossing over each other in the night? And feeling that it would be better to have a little patience, for he would know all these things later on, he said no word but followed Cummins to the hut.

What happened to them, your honour? You may guess that when I tell you that in the morning they were waked by the little boy crying to them, saying: look now at the trouble you've shoved me into, for yonder is our father cutting a stick in the hazel copse to beat me if I refuse to tell him the truth. But you'll be helping me out of this trouble, for the one that gets the pleasure should get the pain. Before Curithir could answer him, the door was opened by the hermit, who began to read their faces, and being almost sure he had read them truly, he turned to the boy, saying: you see this stick? This stick is for you, and not a whole inch of hide will I leave on your back unless you tell me the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for I think there was bad work done in this place last night. Cummins was, as I've said, seventy at this time, and the boy could have cast him on the ground, but there isn't a boy in Ireland, God be praised, that would raise his hand to a priest, for one is never sure that he mayn't have the sacred elements about him somewhere. It matters little to him if he tells you the truth, Curithir said, for if he opens his lips to tell lie or truth I will have his life. At this the boy began to weep, and Cummins answered that he should not have put this great trial upon them, but what has happened cannot be undone, he said, and the fault is with the man; so come with me, Curithir, and I'll put you on the shore with a letter in your pocket that you'll take to the holy father in Rome; he may be able to shrive you for the sins you've committed last night, which is more than I can

do for you. Go to him at once with all speed, make your way to Rome lest God take you in your sin and plunge you into hell for the entertainment of the big devils that dwell below. And while you're walking to him I will be praying for your soul and for the soul of the poor woman beside us the way she won't be lost for ever if she repents and if you repent of your deceiving ways. Sorra deceiving, said Curithir, and you might have known what would happen. We won't argue that, said Cummins: get you into the boat. And you, he said to the altar-boy, stay here with the woman until I return. Get you into the boat, he said again, for Curithir was loth to leave Liadin. But he dare not disobey the hermit, and Cummins laying himself to the oars like a young man, God putting a strength into him that wasn't natural, so that in a few minutes the keel was grating on the sand beyond. Out of my boat with you now, and do penance for your sins and pray that the holy father may shrive you, but never let me see your face on this island again, not till your beard be whitened and all the wickedness gone out of your heart.

Cummins took up his oars again and in a few minutes he was back to the island, and what do you think was the first thing he saw? Liadin lying in the lake, dead and drowned, where she had fallen from a rock, she having climbed it to try to see the last of Curithir. This is a bad day for all of us, the hermit murmured to himself, and taking the boy by the scruff of the neck he beat him severely, saying: take this and take that, for it's through your fault the woman is dead and drowned and maybe in hell at this moment, unless the great God in his mercy knows that she repented before she tumbled into the water. Now be off with you, you limb, he said, and all the rest of the day he was busy digging a grave.

And it is in that grave that Liadin is lying to this day with the rowan-tree growing over her, for all that man

could say to the differ. And for the hind end of the story I've to tell that long after Cummins was dead Curithir came back, old and broken with travelling the world. As he came through the great woods to the lake the people didn't know him, and nobody in all Ireland knew him to be the great poet Curithir who had gained such glory for himself in the courts of kings. He was white and ragged, for age and wolves had hunted him, and he had barely escaped with his life, and would not have done that if maybe the God above him had not wished him to stand at Liadin's grave. Is there no hermit at all on the island? he asked. Not a one at all, they told him; that island is as empty as a tin can with a hole in it, but the hermit's boat is beyond still. He got into the boat and laid to the oars, and he found the grave after much searching for it, and when he did find it he lay down beside it, saying: well, I've come to my meering. There he breathed his soul away, and the hermit, looking down, prayed such a prayer for him that God could not choose but hear. As he did not come back the villagers sought him out on the island, and they dug a grave and stretched him in it, and not many years afterwards the rowan-trees planted above the grave reached across one to the other, their branches getting together and intertwining as a token of the great love that was lying under their berries, that were red as Liadin's lips. Her lips were like that, as red as the rowan berry. That is the end of my story, maybe it wasn't too long, your honour. Your story, Alec, I said, is to my mind a beautiful relic of the Middle Ages, as lovely as the Tara Brooch, and the brooch it brings back to Ireland to me, the vanished Ireland, the Ireland of my dreams. How long ago do you thing it was that Liadin met Curithir by this stone? I've often asked myself that question, your honour, but from what I remember, and from what my father used to be saying

that his father said, it was long ago indeed. It might be a thousand years ago.

And then in the pleasant, resinous odour of the larch-trees, that a random breeze flying in and out of the wood carried towards us, and in the hum of the bees making for their hive, and in a consciousness of the beauty of the long grass waving in the wind, Trusselby and I talked of ancient Ireland as well as we knew how, myself prompting him with memories of what I had picked up in conversation with Kuno Meyer and Trusselby falling back on what he heard from his father and his grandfather of what Ireland had been.

A country of great loneliness; of monks who had monasteries everywhere, and who sat in their cells beautifying the gospels with ornamented scrolls, filling them in with strange, wonderfully drawn patterns, garlands of leaves and wreaths, with nooks and corners for the birds and squirrels. That part of the story, Trusselby, in which the hermit tells Liadin and Curithir how he will sit in his cell continuing the illumination of the gospels, as patiently as his cat waits for the mice, is delightful. May God rest his soul, father used to tell it the same as I am after telling it to you, and he got it from his father, Trusselby answered.

It may have been the perfumed shade of the larches and the murmur of the long grass that won my thoughts out of the present till I looked into the Ireland that was before the Danes came—a quiet, sunny land, with trees emerging like vapours, with long herds wandering through the haze, watched over by herdsmen. In that land all was a dream for beast and herdsmen and for the monks who in their cells patiently illuminated the gospels with strange device while their cats waited patiently for the mice behind the wainscoting. A brooding, sacred peace reigned over the land that I looked into; and I understood that in those halcyon days Ireland lay immersed in

a religious dream that the world never knew before or since, without stirs or sign of danger except when a galley's prow showed in the estuaries. And for a long time the Danish pirates ravaged only the coast-lands. A land of forests and of marshes with green uplands, I said aloud, and Trusselby, as though he had been dreaming my dream, answered: one half of this land must have been no better than a big bog, and worse than a bog, sir, a marsh full of reeds and bitterns with ducks by the million. And snipe, I said. And we fell to talking of the great snipe-shooting in Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Trusselby could tell of many great shots. The best was a Mr. Keyes, the same gentleman that had two thoroughbred stallions snorting round the country in your own time, your honour. It was a bad day he didn't bring home his forty or fifty brace. My father, Trusselby, was a good snipe shot, and he told me that many a time he brought home fifty-nine and a half birds, but he could never get the thirty brace. I wouldn't be saying a word against your own father, God be his rest, Mr. Moore, but I've heard from my father that Mr. Keyes often brought back fifty. There isn't much left of our forests now, and one time they covering all the Burran mountains. It was Cromwell, bad cess to him, that downed the timber, for it gave shelter to the ones that would be rising and striking a blow for Ireland. I don't know, Trusselby, when the last wolf was shot in Ireland; somewhere in the seventeenth century, wasn't it? Aye, the wolves went off when the trees went off. In those days Ireland was the land of trees, I've heard my father say, and his father before him told the same story. There was many a strip left here and there of the old forests in his time, but there's not much left of them now.

We fell to talking of the wolves, and how hard it must have been for the ancient folk to protect their flocks. Sure they hadn't that trouble: hadn't we the finest wolf-

hounds in the world, your honour, and plenty of them too?

The Irish wolf-hound is a subject on which we were both eager to talk, myself having heard that the last of the true breed were seen at Westport House about 1825 or 1830. After that the breed was allowed to die out, and what they have been doing since to revive it is but a mockery. Great Danes crossed with Russian deer-hounds; there might be a touch of the mastiff too, and very like in appearance to the old wolf-hound they be, your honour, but I wouldn't trust them to go against a wolf—no, nor against a good strong fox. How did we get the wolf-hound? Did we breed him ourselves? We did that, but I'm not saying that we didn't help the strain by blood from beyond in the Pyrenees, where wolves are as plentiful as nuts. For another thing, my father used to be saying that the monks that lived at Bregen were fair destroyed by the wolves. I mean their flocks, your honour, not themselves, for the wolf is a cowardly creature, and unless he's got the other ones with him he wouldn't dare to look at a man. It's the innocent sheep them fellows do be digging their jaws into, and it isn't until the whole flock be torn and mangled that they get off with themselves into the forests, and up and away among the hills that you see around us now. The same hills used to be all scrub and forest, and there's plenty of hiding in the holes of the rocks for them fellows, and they with tails like a pot-hook, and with pointy ears and long, snouty chaps to their jaws, and up and down them jaws teeth, be God, that would give you the jigs to look at, all sizes and sorts, terrible once they get inside the flesh, like Micky Murphy's big cross-saw when himself and his brother do be pulling it, Micky in the pit and Pat above on the balk: only the saw cuts cleaner; the wolves snap and snatch away, that's the way they fight, snatching and tearing until the bit comes out, not like the dog, that

holds on to his bite. But the dog is quick to learn, and what made the Irish hound a great fighter was the same snapping trick that he got off the wolves.

You were telling, Alec, about some hounds that came over from the Pyrenees. I'll be at the story presently, your honour, or maybe it would do me as well to go on where I left off. And where was that? I disremember it now. You were telling about the destruction of the flocks belonging to the monks that lived at Bregen.

I was, indeed, your honour; they were terribly cut about by the wolves, and the monks lost their best hounds in the fighting that was always going on. There was only an old bitch left, and they without a dog to line her on account of a falling out they had with the king about a piece of land. While they were telling each other about their losses, and planning snares and pitfalls, what do you think but there came into the Abbot's mind the thought of a young Irish monk who had left Ireland a while before that to teach Latin and Greek to the folk beyond there in the Pyrenees. I wouldn't give a rotten nut, says he, for the snares they do be setting. There isn't a wolf will go into them, except an odd one, and it blind with old age or hard of the hearing, or without a smell in his nose. Far better it would be to send a letter to the Pyrenees asking the Abbot beyond if he has a few hounds he could be sparing, or a pup maybe. He won't like to part with his dogs, though he had them from us a matter of ten years ago, so it's only fair if he gives us a few of the pups to pull us through. He did that. The French Abbot told them in a letter that he was sending three dogs to Bregen bred from the stock that had come to them from Ireland; each of the three, he said, was a match for a wolf. Mind you, it's a good dog will face the wolf and the pair of them all alone.

The monk he was sending with the dogs was Marban, a young fellow of the Gael that had gone to the Pyrenees

with his share of the Latin and the Greek the way he'd be teaching. The Abbot had to send him, for nobody could travel easy in Ireland, and they not knowing the language of the country. How long would your honour say it would be from this place to the Pyrenees? About a thousand miles, Alec, I'm thinking. And a thousand miles, with three dogs under your hand, Alec answered, would be a journey of about a couple of months if he came through the Frenchmen's country. Which is not at all likely, I rapped out. It's more likely he took ship at Bordeaux and landed at Waterford. Waterford itself is a good step from the county of Mayo. Alec interjected: it is; it's a long, weary walk, and it's full of dangers. A man might easily lose himself in the forests at that time. My grandfather was never tired of talking of Ireland in the days gone by, and of the forests that were everywhere except where there were bogs. Some of the hills were free from trees, of course, or the people wouldn't have been able to live at all, for they hadn't a thing barring the sheep and the cattle, just like now.

Perhaps there's no part of the world that is changed less than Ireland herself. In those times there were four great roads, one running from north to south, and another going from east to west, and the people were divided between the ones that lived in the monasteries and the ones that drove the cattle from this pasture to the next one. Over the lot of them were a few warriors who rode in chariots. The houses were made of wood, and that's why there's none of them left now. They were all burned or battered down by the foreigner. Has your honour ever been to the Arran Islands to see the big fort? And, mind you, that was built before Patrick came, when the men were pagans.

Well, putting it all together, it was no easy time young Marban had, doing his twenty miles a day, for if he did less than that the wolves wouldn't have left a sheep in

the county of Mayo. So he struggled on, thinking about the monks that were losing their flocks, asking his way from this monastery to the next one, and sometimes holloing for an advice to the wild lads on the hills, and getting, perhaps, only half an answer from them. Many's the time he must have lost himself between forest and bog, and it was only the best of good luck or the providence of God itself that got him across the Shannon. After crossing it he had to ask his way through the county of Roscommon, a fine big county, and Mayo is a fine big county too, and Bregen wasn't many miles from where we are now sitting. He must have had a hard time, eating berries out of his hand, and the dogs themselves picking up whatever was going in the way of a stray rabbit or a hare, and in that way Marban and his dogs came out at day-fall from a great wood in West Mayo. In front of him there was a marsh covered with wild-fowl, and more coming in at every minute: every kind of duck; gulls would be there too. Faith, they're in it still and plenty of them, but there was more then, and herons and bitterns were as common as children are now. 'Tis a lonesome place a marsh at the close of day, and the boom of the bittern would put a traveller's heart crossways, and he listening to it in the dusk. I believe there were bears, too, in Ireland; and 'tis said the hug of a bear makes pudding of a man's insides. Bears are not partial to flesh, they like berries better, and that's a queer thing for such a bulky lad, but there isn't an animal that came out of Noah's ark that dislikes being interfered with or meddled with more than a bear does. At the time of Marban's arrival, I'll be bound the deer were skipping down to the rivers to drink, but I needn't be wasting my breath on these things, it's only that I'd like you to hear the story the way I heard it.

Well, as Marban was going back to the wood, wishing to tie up his dogs to a tree and make himself as easy as

he could up in the fork of a bough, he saw a light, and after following it for some time he said: maybe that isn't a natural light at all. Maybe that is a will-o'-the-wisp that will lead me to my destruction. He was wrong there; it wasn't to his destruction the will-o'-the-wisp led him, but to his safety, if you can call it that when you've heard the story out, but God knows what might have happened to him if he had done the night in that wood.

When he was going back into it he caught sight of another light, and he said: that looks a better one, that's a fine steady light; that's the light from a window, and wherever there's a window there's a door, and wherever there's a door there's a roof, and wherever there's a roof there's a bed; and for this night any sort of bed will do me. But the poor man didn't know the sort of bed he was going to, he was that full of hope, and every step he took he said to himself: no doubt at all but it's a house I'm walking to this minute, or it's a monastery, or maybe it's the court of a king. He tried to remember who were the kings in Mayo, but he had been so long out of the country that he couldn't think of their names. Well, said he, small the thing whether I sleep in a castle or a nunnery, or the court of a king this night, if only I can put a bit into my own mouth and the mouths of the pups here; and if I get a pillow underneath my head I'll be well contented. I need no more and ask no more. God be praised, I'm saved; I am so, glory be to God, he cried, and he hit a thump on the gate.

It was at the third knock that the Mother Abbess poked her head out of a window, and not three minutes afterwards there were three other heads poking out of other windows. Good, decent women they are, and of my own race, the monk said. They won't be grudging me the bit to eat and the sup that washes it down. He wasn't wrong there, for as soon as the Abbess heard his story and his tale she bid him wait till she had got some clothes on

her back. We've been in bed, young youth, this half-hour, she said; but I'll let you in. When she had slung a cloak on she opened the door and let himself and his dogs in, and she saying: the blessing of God on yourself and on these three fine dogs that are sniffing at my feet this minute. Badly they're wanted. The boys up the hill will be glad to have them three the way the wolves have been making havoc and destruction amongst the flocks. There isn't a flock left in the country, my son, not a shepherd but has his share, some of them two, and some of them three, and some of them the good half of a flock, but with the help of God and these three fine dogs, we'll have mutton to our bread on Sundays and holidays and odd times as well. We haven't tasted meat lately, but here's a bit left, she continued, from last night, and we depriving ourselves of it, little thinking that you would be wanting it more than we do after your long travel, my poor young man. Was it Marban you said you were called? A good name it is surely in this country.

Such was her canter while she cut the bread and poured him out a noggin of ale. We don't drink ale ourselves, she said, but we have it for strangers, the ones that do be wanting it. While talking she kept on looking at the lad, taking stock of his size and his shape, and from what father told me and what he heard from his father before him, Marban was a fine young fellow when he was in it, a long-legged lad with spreading shoulders to him, with red lips, and a mouthful of teeth as white and as strong as the ones inside the faces of his hounds that were already stretched and snoring by the hearth, too tired for even their feed.

She seemed to be well pleased with the traveller, and kept on putting questions to him about himself and the ways of the monastery he had left behind in foreign parts. She wasn't a woman you would be calling young, and she wasn't an old woman either: a youngish woman

falling into flesh as the roses will be doing in a month's time, when they open out like small cabbages. She only had a few clothes on, being in a hurry to open the door to him, one of the long blue cloaks you might have seen worn by the married women when you were a boy, and it slipped on over the gown she'd gone to bed in. Well, she was so full of the lad eating at her table that she had no heed of herself, more often than not showing herself away up her legs and down into her bosom, puzzling the young monk, who did not know how to let on he wasn't taking notice of her. You will understand how this was right well, your honour, when I tell you that one of the questions she was haggling at was the distance between his monastery and the nearest nunnery; and great was her surprise when she heard that there wasn't a nunnery closer to him than twenty miles. Sure that's ridiculous, said she. How do you be getting your temptation? said she. Tell me that now, said she. What good are we doing here if we be not overcoming strong temptations? she said. And barring the women, what temptations are there in this world for monks who have the height of eating and drinking, and aren't called away to fight for any king? There aren't any, said she. And the young man not answering her, she went on that way all the time, until at last, by dint of arguing, she got him to fall in with her way of thinking instead of the one he was used to, and he told her that all she said seemed to be true enough, and that the sticking of yourself into the way of temptation so that you'd get a prize for standing out against it used to be practised in the monastery of the Pyrenees long ago, but had been renaged by the Church because lots of the folk hadn't been able to shove back the temptation quick enough to save their souls from the danger. But as I've been telling ye, the Mother Abbess answered him: what good is it to be living at all if it isn't to be overcrowding the devil?

And if a few should fall back into his claws, isn't that their own sin and their own folly and their own lookout? Is there to be no thought for the ones that be striving to get a place up in heaven and they not having any longer the ways and means, temptation having been forbidden by the Church? 'Tis a poor thing, I say, and a hard thing when the strongest are held back by the weakest, and the fine places in heaven are empty, there being no person to win them.

As the remark came the door opened and Sister Blathnat came, and she so tidily dressed that the Mother Abbess couldn't keep her tongue quiet and snapped out that she had been too long delaying to bid the stranger welcome. And when will the rest of the sisters be coming in? They'll be here, Sister Blathnat answered, inside a minute or two minutes. And strange things they will be hearing when they do come. And when all had forgathered the Abbess repeated all the monk had just told her: that there wasn't a nunnery with a female in it within twenty miles of his monastery in the Pyrenees, and that they didn't want one, it having come to pass that a man is forbidden to put himself into temptation for fear he might be bet. Did you ever hear the like of that story before, Sister? And isn't it the great nonsense? As I was telling Brother Marban here, our work in the world is the overcoming of the devil, and if we aren't at it all our lives, what chance is there for us to get a place in heaven at all, to say nothing of a fine easy one?

Sister Blathnat was a tall, sloping woman, with soft eyes, such as one sees in a deer. Her hair was like silk, brown with a yellow shine in it, and the longest legs a woman ever had, measuring them from the knee to the ankle, and wonderfully sweet were they, the sort that would stir up the heart of any man to be at her. And she gained great advancement with her legs, moving them

while she spoke, her eyes fixed on the monk, crossing and uncrossing them as she'd a right to do, for all this was her business, and his business was to think of our Lord Jesus, who had died for him on the cross, and she too would have to think of the same thing, and be saying prayers while all this was going on.

The nun sitting beside her, Sister Muirgil, was a small woman, with round, inquisitive eyes, which she kept raising and lowering as if she's set the monk thinking that it might be harder for him if he were put to it to resist her than Sister Blathnat. After her there came another nun, Sister Brigit, a thin woman that at first sight you might be taking for a girl, so rosy were her cheeks, and the finest head of hair she had in the county of Mayo, it ringletting about her neck like the ferns in May, and her eyes were kindly, yet she was in no way good-looking, barring that she made a fine shape through her gown.

Other men found that they were better helped up the difficult way to heaven by Sister Eorann, a girl as brown as a berry she was, with crinkly hair and merry eyes and with much pleasant talk. She was the last but one to get out of bed and come down, and Marban guessed that she was someone in the nunnery, for she joined in with the Mother Abbess, interrupting her telling Marban that God allowed the devil to test men with temptations, but measuring these always to their strength. The women, said she, are the best temptation of all the temptations; everybody knows that, and it is only the great and good, the ones that are worthy of high places in the kingdom of heaven, that can resist the women without going to the tub. The monks from Crith Gaille come down and they stretch beside us as quiet and gentle as lambs beside their ewes, and no evil in them at all. Of course they are burning all the while, and well they may, but it is only by burning here that we escape the burning and

the blazes of hell. Is it not the same with you women? Brother Marban asked. And the Mother Abbess answered him: it's the same for us as for them. Burning we do be, and mighty uneasy, for are we not always tempting each other, and together overcoming our temptations, thereby winning great rewards? 'Tis like going up the ladder, we begin at the lowest step and end at the top one. For myself, being forty years of age, the young men lie with me, who, though no longer young, am still able to stir their blood; but the old monks lie with the sisters until they contrive power over themselves and great resistance to any of us. Any, Sister Blathnat said, except Sister Luachet, who hasn't yet lain with a man. The Abbot, said the Abbess, picking her up, will lie with Sister Luachet if he recovers from the sickness that is on him. He's very sick, the poor man, and he's as old as the hills. It will be his last temptation. He'll not be long with us, and I'd like to have him high up in heaven, ready to receive us all when the time of temptation is over and done with.

The talk went on about Sister Luachet till she came into the room, and when she came in the monk saw the prettiest girl he ever did see. Her hair was the colour of the corn before the reaper goes in with his sickle, and her eyes were well set in her head, and round and blue and pleading, and her shape was pretty throughout. Small breasts she had, and straightened flanks, and round thighs, and ankles as pretty as a young donkey's. She had a live smile on her face, something that put one in mind of a bird and of a flower, and of pleasant harmless things. The Mother Abbess told Luachet to strip herself so that Marban might see what a trial she would be to the devil in times to come, and she winning high places in heaven for the monks, and he not getting one monk of the monks for his realm below.

Isn't that so, my little Luachet? said she, and the girl

clapped her hands, saying: it is, Mother; I'll be making saints and saving saints in the times to come. The Mother Abbess continued her canter: but we'll wait till she fades a little, the girl, before we allow her to lie with the monks at Bregen, only with the Abbot himself if he comes out of the sickness, and it will take little Luachet to stir up a flame in him, poor old man, and he seventy-five if he's a day, so that he may win a place in heaven will do honour to Ireland. And now, the Reverend Mother continued, slip into your gown, child, and your cloak, for the night is chilly.

In the Pyrenean monastery, the place this man comes from, there is no nunnery within twenty miles, and the monks live there without temptation from a woman year's end to year's end, eating their fill and drinking their load, but not a chance nor the ghost of a chance for them to conquer themselves. Strange ways the Church has fallen into, and strange times for the world. Ah! it's only in holy Ireland, I'm thinking, that the saints are still living.

Mother, interrupted Brother Marban, in the South the blood is hotter than it is in the North. Ah! the Mother Abbess grunted; true for you. It's in holy Ireland only that strength is given to man to best temptation, and now, for it's getting late, which of us is going to lie with Brother Marban to-night, and he not having had a temptation to strive with for this long while back? Any one of you might strike up a flare in that kind of flesh. Brother, though you do look like a virtuous and a holy young man, I'll lie with you myself this night, for I'm older and wiser and better able to be staunch if the devil tries to cut any capers beyond ones that we expect from him and are used to. We've managed to keep him out of this place up to now, so don't be worried or frightened, for he won't pass the doors and windows, sprayed as they are with holy water, nor will he try the chimney, for the vane itself is the form and shape of a holy cross, protection enough.

Maybe you have an extra crucifix handy, Mother, said Marban, and there is great virtue in that indeed. I have, she answered. I will put this one round your neck, the way you'll hold it in your hand and be kissing it while you're in the bed, for that's what will give you courage to hold out against the temptation. And now, my children, good-night to the lot of you, she said to the other nuns. Out with you, and leave me here to my troubles with this young man.

When she had shut the door behind them she came over to Marban and told him to kneel down alongside herself and say a prayer; so they did that, but she prayed so long that the boy thought his knees would break away from under him. Tender you do be about the knees when you're young. First he lifted up one knee and then he lifted up the other one and there wasn't the smell of a prayer left in him when the nun got up with a grunt and gave her leg a shake. Now, said herself, we'll be getting into bed. Do you begin to strip, and I'll not be long behind you.

The young man was in travelling dress, and there were boots to be unlaced, and brooches to be unhooked, and many other things, and while he was laying his clothes aside and folding them up, he had his back to the Abbess, for he wasn't used to this kind of thing; but she had little on her, barring the cloak and the shift, and when the cloak was off she says to him: now, Brother Marban, none of this dodging your lawful temptations; turn round here and take a look at me and don't be afraid, for God will give you grace to resist me. He found she was very like what he thought she would be, like one of those big cabbage roses, all pink and white, thick about the thighs, too big in the belly for sightliness, or, as they say, beef to the heels like a Mullinger heifer. But a fine woman all the same, and when they were side by side together, she gave him a prod and said she again: face

round here to your temptations and face them bravely, for your guardian angel is always beside you. But, says he, if the devil should be stronger in me and overcome the angel? You mustn't talk like that, said she. The monks in the monastery above would come down here and drive you out into the wilderness with clouts of a stick if they thought—— They'd kill me, he interrupted. I wouldn't go as far as to say that, she said, but they would do a damage to you, and they'd have no further truck with you. The wilderness is a bad place at night, the way it's so full of bears and wolves. Be thinking of that now and you're safe. But you mustn't be thinking of the other things, for everything comes out of your head, and if you don't let the thought into your head, you're as safe as I am. You're quiet enough as it is. There's nothing to fear, my good boy, and the nun passed her hand over him, and finding him slack everywhere, she said: there's not much temptation in you, young man, so let you lie now in my arms, and look into my eyes, and whatever temptation there may be about will rise up and you have the chance to scoop it out of yourself.

If I get away from this place with my life, said the young man to himself, they won't catch me here again for ever, and I won't stop running either until my feet give out, and until there are nine twisting miles of scrub between myself and themselves here in this house of God. The monks up yonder would be hard men with no pity in them for them that tumble. God be praised that I did my forty miles this day through tough country, and me with three healthy dogs pulling out of me, for the same journey would leave the sinfullest man with little humour for a bit of tallow at the end of it, to say nothing of a cleric and he guaranteed by the grace of God. But never a word of all this to the nun that was in his arms, and she thinking that nothing but the power of God could make him so like a dish-cloth. You've

conquered your temptation before you came here, said she. But we must find a better one to rouse you. The devil a one here will do that, said the lad to himself. At daybreak I'm away to the monastery, and maybe I'll be safer there.

CHAP. XIX.

HE was asleep the minute after the door closed behind her, and he didn't rouse or budge until the sun was high up in the heavens and the nuns had been knocking at his door more times than once. Nor was it till the third or fourth knock that he opened his eyes, but at the fifth or the sixth; and seeing the sun that strong in the room, he said to himself: I'm done for; I've slept it out. I'll be kept here by the women, and if I'm fresh and vigorous, and lying with one of the younger ones in the night that's coming, the Lord will be put to the pin of his collar to save me from the devil. I'd do well to kiss the crucifix, said he, and dragged on his clothes, for he could hear a gathering of them beyond his door, and thinking they might be coming in upon him, he bounced out into the very middle of them and very soon Sister Eorann was stuck on him like a burr. You remember, your honour, the almost crooked little figure with clinkly hair and grey eyes, a babbling little nun, that was soon telling Marban to his face of his grand success last night. As quiet as a lamb you were said the mother to me, and you inside her arms and well in, and that we'd have our work cut out to work a temptation in you. But it's grand work, indeed, getting the better of the devil.

Before Marban could answer her she was telling him the story of their nunnery: how a hundred years ago Suibhne MacCalmain, king of Dal Ariadhe, was mad and distracted by a great sickness that was on his wife, and no one could cure her, though all the wise women in Connaught had been by her bed-side giving her every

kind of medicine, and no good coming to her out of it. Sorra one of them could tell what was the matter with her, only that she was wasting away, and she was no more than a dead bird at the bottom of a cage with its legs poked up when MacCalmain came running out of the house to throw himself into the river and drown himself therein. On the way he met three nuns, and said they to the king: where are you off to, MacCalmain? I'm off to throw myself into the water. What's that for? said they. It's to drown myself, said he; for the wife is dead, said he, or she's dying on me. How do you make that out? said a nun of the nuns, and MacCalmain said: there's hardly a grip of her left. All the same, said the nuns, her life isn't done with yet. How is that? said the king. What do you mean by that? said he. Do you not know, said the nun, that the angels are gathering this minute of the minutes above there in the clouds, blue and white they be, to bear her soul to God? I know that same, said the king; I know it well. Good for you, MacCalmain, said the nun. And tell me this now, said she: do you want to separate yourself from herself for ever? Is that it? Separate myself from herself, it is not that, said he; and he stood gazing and gaping without a word in him. As soon as he got hold of a few odd words he said that he was off to his drowning in the river because he couldn't live without her. Live! said a nun of the three nuns. We don't live on this earth at all, it's a dream; our own life is heaven itself, close to the Lord God, and he in the middle of the holy saints. Come away from the river, MacCalmain, and pray to have your sins forgiven and you to be restored to your wife when she's wearing a better crown than the one you gave her. Don't say a word against the crown, says the king, for he was a proud man, and he got the crown made himself; but all the same the words of the nuns struck him as being wise words, and he was going off to do their bidding when one

of the three nuns called him back. We are going to pray God the way you'll get back your wife. Do that same, said he, for heaven itself would be a poor place to me if I couldn't plant my seat alongside the seat of Etain, the one I gave my crown to and my heart, and all my wishes and my wants. And now tell me, he said, since you understand these things so well, will he be giving her to me plump and hearty, the way she was last year, or will she be all skin and bone, the way she is this year? A foolish question, to be sure, but the man was ruined with grief, and even the holy faces of the nuns, and they looking sideways at him, could only pacify him bit by bit, until the truth dawned on him that life on this earth is no more than a shadow of the long life that's stored up for us in heaven. If it's that way, said he to himself, the less I think about the earth the better, for I'm getting on and there can't be many more years in front of me. But if I get to heaven I'll have an eternity with Etain, and that's a long time. So here goes for Etain.

With that he gave up the kingdom and went and joined the hermits that do be in the wilderness, passing his kingdom over to his brother Guaire and giving the nuns a whacking lump of his forests and glebe for the building of a nunnery, they bargaining to be offering up prayers, and good ones, so that he might meet his wife, her body and soul, in heaven.

It wasn't long after that he began to study the Latin, and as soon as he had enough of the tongue to get through Mass they made a priest out of him, and with his cassock on his back he was the proud man, thinking small, rough potatoes of his brother Guaire, the new king. You have a soft silk shirt on you like I used to wear when I was a king and a sinner, but my cassock scratches my skin, making many a sore place, but every one of these scabs will be lifting me up nearer and nearer to the blessed Etain, and she, if it's the will of God, a saint among the

saints. Whereupon the two brothers went up to where the nuns were building, and MacCalmain put off his cassock and dug into the work of collecting wattles and driving in stakes with a hammer, and Guaire watching him, wishing to do the same, but of course he couldn't, for that's no king's job. But he was proud of the brother all the same, and he thought a lot of the nuns too. Great women were the nuns of old Ireland, content at first with little enough, a church, a refectory, a kitchen, a library, a workshop, a guest-chamber maybe, and to get these built, great labour was needed. My father was apt at telling a story how St. Patrick, going the road from Mayo to Ulster, cried like a baby when he saw the blood on the woodmen's hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks in two great streams. The nuns would never have been able to clear the land of forest if MacCalmain had not asked his brother Guaire to send up help; sure, they couldn't do it. The nuns, he said, haven't time to say as much as a prayer, and my poor wife and I are lonely one for the other, she away there in heaven and I where I am in this place. Send these nuns good help the way they'll get their building finished and be able to say their prayers. The wife may be in purgatory yet for all we know. Send up some good help, Guaire, and we'll all get a prayer said for us against the time we'll be in purgatory, for there will all of us be sooner or later, this day or the next, and God knows for how long.

All that I'm telling your honour Marban heard from Eorann, and when his turn came to speak he said: you've heard, Sister, that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. We read the same words in the gospels, Eorann answered, but it is the Abbot beyond explains hard things to the laity; and sure it is only just and reasonable that we should be rewarded in the next world for the temptations that we conquer in this one.

To this Marban could only answer: 'tis true for you, Sister. 'Tis true indeed. And he wondered at her blabbing little tongue, her round, childlike eyes, and it was with an uneasy mind and an itchy body that he followed her round the lands of Crith Gaille, asking himself, if he had to lie with every nun in the nunnery, would he be strong enough to resist the lot of them the way he did Mother Abbess, or would he have to give in. Let me out of this place, he said to himself, and I'll take care not to put one foot of my feet into it again. I would never have come back to the old country if I dreamt that such trials and goings on were in pickle for me. You're not listening to me, Marban, the little nun was saying. I am indeed, said he; and to prove it, you're telling me that when a school is added huts are built round it for the students, and that the Mother Abbess was often of the same family as the founder, the office coming down from father to son. Isn't that what you said, or isn't it? And Eorann had to give in that he did know what she was talking about. But what is there on your mind? she asked. For there is something. I'm thinking about the difference there is between the Ireland I left and the one I've come back to. What difference can you be seeing, for you were no better than a child when you left Ireland? she answered. And you've come back to the same Ireland as always was and always will be, praise be to God for ever and ever.

They hadn't walked very far before he said: we've got out of the way of putting ourselves into temptation, and she answered him: is it how the Mother Abbess made you out to be holier than you are and that you're afraid of us? It isn't that, said Marban. It is not that indeed. What else can it be, said Eorann, that would stop a man from winning a high place in heaven and he getting the chance? He might be a humble sort of man, said Marban, and he might be one would be content with a small

place. You won't be talking like that to the sisters whom I see coming towards us, for they will be expecting you to look upon the temptations we are laying out for you as your heavenly fortune.

You never could be sure with Eorann that she wasn't making fun of you, for there was a sting at the back of whatever she said, and Marban felt that he didn't like her. As she went off, he said to himself: well, it won't be that one will give me a fall. And he threw an eye over the others that were now round him, talking to him, each one trying to get him to herself, for they all wanted to hear about the monastery in the Pyrenees, and what sort of men the foreign monks were, and if he liked speaking the French better than he did the Irish; and they wanted to know if the prayers and the fastings were long beyond there in the Pyrenees, and what penances they got, and if the Abbot called up every monk in turn to receive many stripes on the hand. We get two hundred, one said to Marban, in the days before Lent, to remind us that we are at the beginning of the year's penance. But, said he, your prayers here don't seem to me to be out of the way long. You had matins at midnight the same as there is in every convent, and I said Mass for myself at seven. The monks at Bregen, said he, don't seem to be coming down to fetch their hounds. We didn't send them word, Blathnat answered. And we won't send them word yet a while, Muirgil rapped out, for we want to have you here to ourselves so that you may be getting great glory for us.

Now Marban didn't give her an answer, for he was brooding on the dangers that Crith Gaille held for him, and wondering how soon he'd be out of the place, and wondering if he could hit on a plan to trick the nuns and make off. So he kept turning and twisting the ways of escape over in his mind, but nothing came of it until he thought of the dogs. Wouldn't you like, said he, to have

a look at my fine hounds? So they went round together to the outhouse where the dogs were tied, and when he called out Cathba, a great baying and scratching answered him. Crede's welcome was an impatient whimper, and Marban bade the nuns hearken. The finest tongue of all is Duban's, he said. And when the doors were opened the three great hounds rose up on their hind legs, straining at their chains, and the nuns cried out and ran and hid themselves behind the doors; but Marban said: you could trust a child with them, 'tis only the smell of a wolf rises up their bristles. So eagerly did the hounds strain against their collars that Marban could hardly loosen them from their chains, but once they were free it was a fine sight to see them at play, jumping over each other and over the nuns, upon the shoulders of everybody, licking their faces and away again, smelling round the tree-trunks, and relieving themselves; going down on their haunches and then scattering the earth and leaves in a great tumult, jumping, barking, and galloping ahead of Marban, who was chewing away at the idea of how, in the name of this and that, he was ever to get away from Crith Gaille. It would be a fine thing, he was saying to himself, if I up and told these fine ladies: my dogs are on the trail of a wolf; I must after them. And that's the very thing he would have done if he'd any luck. But a wolf that was lying in a thicket, was startled out of it, and the three dogs overtook him at the end of the glade. A good fight it was, for the wolf was in his prime, and had there been but two dogs at him instead of three he might have overcome them and got away. But he couldn't fight his way past three. He broke Crede's paw in a snap, and took a lump out of Cathba's throat, but while he was doing them deeds, Duban got him by the windpipe, and the wolf had to give in. Terrible animals wolves; and the Irish wolf was as bad and worse than the Pyrenean fellow.

I never saw a wolf fight like that one, said Marban. But what ailed the beast to be lying out in that copse? he said to himself, for he has knocked my plans upside down.

The rest of the day went doctoring Crede's broken paw and Cathba's wound. So busy was he attending the dogs he forgot night was coming on, and he had no more eaten his supper when the door opened and Blathnat came in, and she in her night-shirt. We go to bed early in this convent, she said. Does it be like that with you away in the Pyrenees? Marban was hard set to answer her, so dry was his throat, and his heart misgave him, for Blathnat's voice was winning, and he liked the pale brown hair showing under the coif she was taking off her head. Seeing that the monk was beginning to shiver and shake she stopped undressing to reprove him, saying, in a quiet, even voice, that he must smother that look of fear on his face, and that he could count on her to see him through the worst of the temptation. Do you be putting your trust in me, she said, and leave shivering and shaking, for while I'm here there's nothing can harm you. But before we lie down tell me what happened last night between yourself and herself, Brother Marban. He told her the truth, only leaving out that perhaps it was the fatigue of his journey had made him able to lie alongside the Mother Abbess's side without a kick in him. I understand you well, Sister Blathnat said. After forty no woman is what she used to be, though for her age there isn't a finer woman in Ireland than herself, and there was a day when she would raise up temptation in the stones. Sister Blathnat, the young man answered, from one year's end to the other, we don't see a woman in the cells beyond, and we think it well enough to live without sin. Now if there is no temptation there's no hermit, not a scrap, she said, and he replied to her that he had talked that question over the night before. This is what I want

to ask you now, said he. Is it true that none of the monks from Bregen have fallen into sin? Tell me that now, said he, and the question seemed to fall so innocently from his lips that it startled Sister Blathnat so much that she said: if that be the way you're going to talk, perhaps another nun had better lie with you, and she was making her way towards the door when Brother Marban said:

Oh, Sister Blathnat, if it must be that I lie with any, let it be with you, for you've a kind face and you'll keep the devil out of my mind. And she said: the same words prove you to have a good disposition anyway. Maybe I made a mistake, so I'll lie with you without tempting you much. But before lying down together we will say a little prayer, and Marban prayed for his life, being sore afraid both of her and of the monks up at Bregen.

I hope, the nun said, I've not kept you too long on your knees. You have not, said he; not so long as herself last night. She always was a long one at her prayers, said Blathnat. We'll strip now, said she, and on these words he put off his cloak and unloosened his tunic. Look at me, said Sister Blathnat. Tell me now if I'm not nicer than dear mother about the bosom? And the monk, turning round, thought that he never saw two breasts prettier or whiter than Sister Blathnat's. Like two white birds they are, he said, being a bit of a poet. And as innocent, she added. Now kiss the crucifix about your neck, and then kiss me, and pray that the temptation that will rise up in you shall be overcome. I will pray indeed, he said. I'll pray for all I'm worth. Faith and troth, you are a holy man, she said, after a while, for you're lying as quiet and easy by my side as a man would lie by the side of his brother. I've met them that were more restless than you, and they advanced in years. Great will be your reward. And creeping in closer, she began telling him that he might seek her shape behind and in front, wherever he pleased; now you feel me, she

said, and you not tempted at all. I am tempted, indeed, said Brother Marban, and what I see in front of me is three years and half a year and me eating dry bread and drinking water at every one of my meals. Starved I'll be, God help me. Then have recourse to your crucifix, she replied, and you'll win out. Get the best of the devil, said she, and keep your grip on me. That's right. Now lie quietly and doze a little. But there was no doze upon him that night, and if he had not the bread and water and three years of it to think about, there's no knowing what would have happened. After a while she took him in her arms and kissed him, saying: Brother Marban, I'll be leaving you now, the devil has been worsted this time for good and all, though one moment I did think I'd got a sniff of him from under the door. Marban agreed to that, and said that he too had smelt the old boy, and that it was well for both of them the windows and doors to be barred the way they were.

And then they fell to talking of the crevices the old man could get through if he were so minded, till Sister Blathnat said: take your hands from my breasts. You've been tempted enough, Brother, and God would not wish a person to be tried beyond his strength. Sleep well, now, like I will myself, and good-night to you, she said, looking at him from the door before closing it. It's just as well that he didn't, she said to herself, as she stood on the stairs; it's always better in the end. For what is the value of the poor life we're living? And it isn't I that would be bringing disgrace upon it, God help me, and on myself, and on our own convent. She said this for she couldn't get it out of her head that Marban was a fresh young lad, and it wasn't more than half-an-hour after getting into her bed before she woke up with a scream out of her, and starting out of her bed with one leap she got to the middle of the floor, the other nuns coming to her, saying: what is it, Blathnat? Tell us what it is

now. But all she could do at first was to stare at them, her senses coming back to her slowly, saying: it was only a dream, thank God. That was no more than a dream. And they, guessing that she had been dreaming of the young man, got round the bed, and she told them all she had done, the way she had put herself up against him telling him that he must take her in his arms, and to be sure and say a prayer lest the devil should be getting the better of him. You weren't tempted yourself at all, Sister? said one of them, with a look. I was, faith, said she, and who knows what would have become of me, for there was a swimming behind my eyes? But I gave a Hail Mary and got rid of it, glory be.

CHAP. XX.

WELL, there they were, sitting round Sister Blathnat's bed just as I'm telling you, and they settling which of them was to give the poor lad his share of trouble on the next night. The monks will be here on Saturday, so you three can lie with him, Sister Eorann, Muirgil and Brigit, one after the other; as soon as one comes out the other goes in, and if he lies quiet while you're with him, there's no doubt but they've sent us a great saint and one that will do honour to Ireland. He's a holy man, indeed. He's a very holy man; you couldn't stir him up with a stick, said the Abbess. These were her very words as they have come down to us in the old stories.

But which of us shall be the first one to lie with him? the nuns asked, and the Mother Abbess answered: you'll draw lots, and on this she got three straws and put them in a box. Whoever draws the smallest one will be the first to lie with him. And the first, your honour, was Brigit, and the second Muirgil. And the third Eorann. That was the way of it. And Brigit, as I told your honour, was a thin girl, with her hair ringletting down

her rosy cheeks, who if she hadn't been a nun she might have been as wicked as the old woman of Blair, she that lay with more kings than any other woman in Ireland till she got old and couldn't manage anything. But we mustn't be getting into another story, Alec said. Well, Marban had all he wanted in the way of trouble from that one. She was a great torment, indeed, turning all his senses reeling, and setting his soul fluttering in him, but he stood his ground, for the grace of God was on him that night. And when the Abbess gave a ring of the bell, Brigit said: 'tis time for me to be off; you're a great man and a holy man, for you've lain very quietly by me considering everything. I tried you deeply, Brother, but I wouldn't have done it only they were bragging about the piety that is in you, and in you it surely is.

The door opened, and as Sister Brigit went out Sister Muirgil went in, saying, as she passed the other one: I can see by your face, Brother Marban, I can see that you've been greatly tried by Sister Brigit, who is famous all over Ireland for the tests and the trials she puts on the men. While saying these words she slipped off the gown; and she stood up, one of them round figures, with plenty of shape despite the flesh that God has put upon them, and with one shape in her that struck the saint's eyes: she did not go in at the knees, her thighs sloping down into her ankles, and from that out into her feet. And when his hand passed over the limbs and between them, anything might have befallen him if she hadn't been a kind-hearted woman. But seeing the trouble he was in, she folded him in her arms just as his mother used to do when he was a gossoon, and said: we'll say Our Father together. A Hail Mary might bring me more relief, he answered. Muirgil laughed at that, and tossed her hair from her little round forehead, and for the rest of the time she told him stories about the monks at Bregen, and how anxious they all were to be tempted by

her and to resist the temptations, for all thought of this earth, said she, was gone clean out of their minds, only of heaven do they be thinking, and that's what puts the great strength in them. And she told him she got into the same way of thinking herself, but there were times when she could only get a grip on the things of this world. And then the things of the other world didn't seem worth a lot, which put a great fright into the monk's mind that while she was with him she might be thinking too much of the things of this world and not enough of heaven; but it was all to the differ, for after a bit she quieted down. Now I must be leaving you, she said, for Sister Eorann will be here in a moment or two, rousing you up again and doing her best against you. But you will be a match for her, won't you, now? You don't fear her. Do you now? Ah! It's a shame, so it is, for you're only a boy, and she's educated. You're not afraid, are you? said she, and she gave him another kiss.

Not a great deal, he answered cheerfully, for he was like a man closer to the top of the hill, or one that had come very nearly to the top, and sees the ring of day breaking all around him. He was proud, to be sure, and that sort of pride is what the clergy calls the spiritual elation that comes on a man when he has beaten the devil. And well he might be proud, I say, for himself and four fine women had defeated and murdered the devil in four great battles. As he gave a twist in the bed, he remembered that his fight had been stiffer than any the monks had waged, for weren't they and the nuns all known to each other for years past as confessors and penitents? And with that thought he got twice as proud. The fresh enemy is the stiffest to conquer, said he to himself, and now the old boy is to deliver the last assault, which will be, I am thinking, no great matter for me to overcome. She isn't to my liking, and that's no gain to me, but I've won such a load of honour as it is, that God himself will

be hard set to find a reward that he can offer me without shame to himself. Here she comes, the hind end of the temptations, and he drew the blanket up to his chin and let on to be asleep.

Asleep you are, Marban, said Eorann, when her turn came, or is it only falling asleep you are without a thought for me at all? The other ones wore you out, but them ones would make anybody tired. I drew the bad number myself. Number three it is. A holy number and lets you in for all the poor jobs. Won't you wake up now and let me into your bed? I'm nearly as tired as you are with the time I was waiting and all. Even if there's no temptation between the pair of us, said Marban, you can get into the bed. After a while, said she: have you got no eyes for me at all, or a pair of hands on yourself? I've all them, Marban thought, but he didn't say a word, for he couldn't think of what to say, and being a polite man he didn't like to say: lie quiet in the bed now like a good girl, and let me be. His weakness was kindness, and so he took her into his arms and kissed her and said: I've said that many prayers this night that the devil is driven out of the convent entirely; not a sniff of him do we get, not one is upon you nor is there one upon me. We're wasting time, said Eorann. She commenced to cry with her head on Marban's shoulder, and soon her tears were running down his neck, first hot and then cold, and then tickling him like a troop of fleas. He asked her what she was crying for, and she said: I did hope to get a great reward with you in heaven, but you won't so much as look at a girl. 'Tis a poor thing and a hard thing to be a nun in this place. Just because I happened to pull the wrong straw, bad luck to the same straw, I'm left without any way of earning a place in heaven. It would make you think that heaven itself, like earth, is all favoritism.

You must not be talking like that, Sister. 'Tis easy

for you, full of glory the way you are this night, but here's myself with nothing to do. And she bent down her head on to his shoulder and whispered: can't you tempt me a little? and handling him freely, she said: it's not so bad, after all, for you're beginning to be restless, and that's a sign, and when you're a little more so, we'll have to begin to say our prayers, or we're a lost pair. What is that I hear? Marban cried. 'Tis only myself talking to you. But I hear a sound from the forest! 'Tis nothing, she said. 'Tis the hunters following the wild swine at the ring of day. Don't mind them, but mind myself.

A great and wonderful music there is, he said, in the sound of a horn heard far away in the depth of the forest. A fine sound it is for the laity to be listening to, she replied, but we should be thinking of the trumpets of heaven which the angels will be sounding to awaken us from the dead, and our Lord coming on the clouds to reward us. And let me tell you this, there won't be as much as the ghost of a reward for me if you lie there with your ears cocked listening to the horn the way you're doing now. The horn is nearer now than it was, Marban answered. 'Tis only the echo of the horn that you do be hearing, and on this earth there's nothing more treacherous than the horn, and she sent a wet stream of tears down his neck the way he thought he would have to be swimming for his life in another minute.

Let me up, he said. Let me out of this bed. One horn, two horns, three horns, and they sounding from different sides. 'Tis a company that must be hunting after the boar. Forget the boar, she cried, and lie here, and take your ease. He was sorry for her, but he said to himself: I've earned a big enough reward.

The monks at Bregen—he began. But she rapped out: what good are they to us? And what good are they to you? I'm only wasting my time here. Good-bye, Marban,

and 'tis the great talk I shall be having with the Abbess about the great power that God has given you, and the prayers you have offered up with me. We haven't said many prayers, said Marban. If we haven't said them out we've said them in, she added, and hurried away to tell the Mother Abbess about the holiness of the man she had been lying with and that they all should be thankful to the Lord for sending them such a man.

CHAP. XXI

NEVER have I lain with a man as quiet as this one, Eorann repeated, as she went upstairs. I might as well have been in bed with my mother. Will you be telling me, said the Mother Abbess, who was waiting at the head of the stairs, that he didn't leave his bed to dip himself in the cistern? I will so, said the nun; he lay by my side talking to me about horns that he was hearing far out in the forests. That's a great saint, I'm thinking, said the Mother Abbess. That's a very great saint, surely. There isn't a monk of the monks at Bregen is holier than him, not the Abbot himself, though perhaps I shouldn't be saying it, and he earning great glory with all of you these last ten years; and with myself off and on for the last twenty. But he isn't as big a saint as that lad, I'm thinking. True enough we're stale to him now, and men that are seventy-five take a deal of stirring, but a little virgin like Luachet might set up a great burning in him that our Lord would be greatly gratified to see overcome. 'Tis a great thought surely that has come to you, dear Mother. Let Sister Luachet lie with Brother Marban. It would be a poor thing indeed if a holy man like him should be denied all the chances that the earth can give him of getting a good place up above. I am in the one mind with you, the Mother Abbess answered. But what about the Abbot? He'll be missing his last chance. Why

should he be missing it indeed? Won't Luachet be the same coming from Marban's bed as she went into it? Blathnat asked. She will not, the Mother Abbess answered, for 'tis the thought that she has never lain by a man's side before that I'm counting on to stir up the devil in our good Abbot, for the last time; the man's years are three score and ten, and for a while back he hasn't been looking himself at all. Ah! well, I remember the time when he——

But you needn't be telling him, cried Sister Blathnat, butting into the middle of the Abbess's recollections. I wouldn't say that, the Mother Abbess answered; once you begin telling lies there's no end to them. Won't Luachet be getting her experience from Marban? Eorann murmured slyly. True for you, replied the Abbess. A little knowledge of mankind in her won't be amiss when it comes to her turn to get into bed with the Abbot, if it ever does come, for it was a bad account we had of him a week ago, and the cough's worse. But isn't it the truth, said Sister Blathnat, that the Abbot would like a man that had resisted all of us, and we all fresh to him, to be allowed the advantage of Luachet? I wouldn't be saying he wouldn't, the Abbess answered. A man's luck is his own luck, and isn't it a great thing that he should come here and show all that holiness? It would be no good thing for us if we denied him what God wishes him to receive. Now, my dear, and she turned round to Luachet, you've been listening to what we said, and as the day is done, put aside the vestment that you're making for the Abbot, and go to the oak chest yonder and take out of the oris root and lavender the finest linen garment, and remember that, lying by our brother, you will be as pleasing in God's sight as you are here stitching a vestment for the holy Mass. A beautiful one it will be, she continued, and she held up the white satin chasuble, embroidered with gold, for the nuns to admire—the one

the Abbot was to wear on his seventy-fifth birthday, when he would celebrate High Mass for them all. 'Tis Luachet is the fine stitcher, God be praised, our little Luachet; but a much finer offering than the vestment she will be herself beside the holy man below stairs, and on these words she took the child to her bosom and asked her if she was afraid.

Afraid, Mother? Why should I be afraid, since it is you who are sending me to this stranger, a holy man, as all the sisters here have proven him to be?

Could the child say better than that? the Mother Abbess said, turning to her nuns. And they all said she couldn't and that no one could. She turned again to Luachet: get yourself ready now. Wash your hair the way there'll be a gloss on it. Look at the gold that is shining through it, and isn't she as nice and as graceful as a little kitten? A great temptation, surely, that none should venture into but the holiest. Go and get ready, Luachet, and don't be shy, for there's no good in that; let him win the greatest prize of all. Do you hear me now, she said; be not shy but push yourself up against him and kiss him in the nape of his neck. You may do that, for it's your business to wake up the old man in him if you can, and we'll be praying for you while we are getting to our beds, and till we fall asleep prayers will be on our lips. We shall be chanting the psalms at midnight, and from lauds to complin, thanking God for the honour we shall be earning, for to-morrow every nun of the nuns in this place will get from me fifty smacks of the ferule on her hand. Go, dear child, and remember all I've told you, for there is nothing that gives more pleasure in heaven than seeing the man denying himself the woman and they both in the one bed.

'Tis time for us to be going to our rest, she said, turning to the other nuns; but you won't forget, my children, what I told Sister Luachet, to be praying well for her,

and all the nuns said they would do that and that they would do it well until the sleep came.

CHAP. XXII.

NOR did one of them break her promise, and out of bed the whole lot of them were at midnight, chanting the psalms, till at last the Mother Abbess said: now, children, here's the day beginning in the east. The time has come for me to use the ferule onto your hands. On these words she turned to the press in which she kept the thong, and all the nuns wincing and watching, knowing well the length of the handle and the breadth and the hardness of the leather, and being faint-hearted, as all women are, they would have been glad to do without the bit of merit they would earn if they could be let off the slaps, for the morning was bitter cold.

Maybe your hands are sore, the Mother Abbess said, as the last nun retired, holding her bruised hands between her knees, but my own back is broken the way I have to leather the lot of you into heaven. 'Tis I myself should be getting whatever recompense is going, for my loins are cracked on me and I've a pain in my head. Now will you have finished with the moaning and the tears, and think a bit of the way the Lord suffered on the cross, and of the way Marban is suffering now and he up against our little Luachet's thighs. She is staying with him a long while now. Too long, indeed, for there ought to be an end to everything, and great saint as the man is, he shouldn't get it too heavy. Are they chanting psalms together? We might do well to hear them, for to see or to hear the holy is next door to being holy.

Down went the lot of them, stepping on the tips of their toes for fear they might disturb the saints in their mutual devotions. Devotions it is, said the Abbess, for we can hear their voices mingled in sweet sighs. But

after listening a little while longer she turned to Blathnat and said: your ears are better than mine maybe, what I hear doesn't sound like psalms. Let you listen now, and, giving her place to the nun, she waited. After listening, Blathnat said: Mother Abbess, it's no psalm I'm listening to. That's no psalm at all. Then what can they be doing to each other? And it isn't prayers that I hear either. Them's not prayers.

Then give your place to Brigit, who may hear better. Yes, let me listen, said Brigit, and she cocked her ear to the keyhole. Sister Blathnat is right. There isn't a psalm in it of all the psalms. After Brigit it came to Eorann to put her ear to the keyhole, and having more courage than the rest, she turned to the Mother Abbess, saying: it's like the doves on the roof they are. Like the doves on the roof? cried the Mother Abbess, and with a great fear in her heart she put her ear to the door, and hearing a scream that could be none else than a love scream, she cried out: 'tis profanation of our holy convent. And together with the nuns she bumped herself against the door until they got it down. Faith, sir, the pair within were in the last round before the Abbess could pull the clothes from off the bed, and tear them asunder. 'Tis all over, said she; the tallow is spilt, said she, her maidenhood is lost to the Lord. Woe is woe. Woe to the Abbot. Come out of it, daughters; come out, I say, for the devil is here, and here he may stop. Sin, sin, she said, and sin on the top of sin. It's not the first; it won't be the last. Come out, children. Come out with yourselves from this cell of sin. Innocents ye are. Get out, I say. Isn't that one the divil? Ah, you'll pay for it. You'll pay for it. Hell's your portion. Hell and hot water. Get out, I say. I'm ruined. I am so. I'm ruined. Will ye get out, or will ye not get out? I'll skin you if you don't get out. Ah, you divil! Ah, you divil!

The nuns followed her out to the terrace, and the five of them walked there, never addressing a word the one to the other in their sorrow, till the monks began to come from Bregen. I see them coming, Mother, Blathnat cried; and now they've stopped at the foot of the hill, for the Abbot is out of puff. How am I going to tell the holy man about that pair? God help me, said the Abbess. What am I going to say to him at all?

I think I mentioned to you, sir, that the Abbot was at this time seventy, and maybe a few years over. My grandfather wasn't sure but it was eighty. Thin he was, and lean and shadowy, frail as a sick bird, he used to say. I liked to hear him tell Marban's story, and he told it so often to me that there was a time when I had this part of it off by heart. But it is a long time since I've told this back end of the story. It not being to the liking of them that do be asking me for stories, I leave it out. Don't leave it out on my account, Alec. Very well, sir, I'll tell the whole of it.

My daughter, said the Abbot to the Abbess, who had just mentioned that she had a tale to tell him sadder than any he had ever heard, it must be a very sad tale indeed, for I've heard my share of sad stories. But before you hear the story, said she, tell me, did the medicines I sent you do you any good? You've got the cough on you yet. Thank you, my daughter, for the medicines; I did not take them, feeling sure that I'll not be better than I am this side of Jordan. But won't you come inside, she said, for there's a wind stirring in the trees? A pleasant wind, he answered her. Get me a chair to sit in. She cried to Blathnat: find my Lord Abbot a chair, and bring a rug for him as well.

When he was seated in the chair, and the rug tucked round him, he said: there's one thing good about a wolf, and that's his fur. Once his fur is taken from him there's no evil in him; and he dipped his hand into the fur as he

might into the holy-water stoop itself. My Lord Abbot—the nun began, and she stopped as a horse will at a heap of stones on the road. Go on, woman, he said: there are words for everything; out with your story. Well, she said, you know about Marban. Know about Marban? said the Abbot. Why, wasn't it myself that wrote to the Abbot in the Pyrenees to ask him to send Marban with the wolf-hounds? Is he here? and how many hounds has he with him? He has three hounds, the Abbess replied. Then all is well. What! Has he been wounded on the way; go on woman. But instead of doing as she was bid she started asking him if he had taken his medicine, and other foolish questions, setting him coughing again. Go on, woman, he cried, as soon as he could get his breath. Go on, woman.

How long has Marban been here? Go on with your story, and be delaying no longer if you'd have me hear it. You see the state I'm in. And afraid to delay any longer, though there was nothing she liked better than dragging a story out by the heels, she told him that Marban had been with them for three or four days. But no further could she go, saying that she'd rather be lying dead at his feet than that her mouth should be telling the dreadful story, and much more rubbish of the sort, angering the Abbot, setting him coughing till he might have choked as much with anger as phlegm.

Oh, my blessed convent ruined, disgraced by him whom we took to be the holiest man in Ireland, saving your Reverence's presence—— He may be easily holier than I am without being the holiest man in Ireland. Go on, my sister, say what you have inside your mouth. Then, with many sobs and waving of hands, for she was one of them high-flown women, she told the story, watching the Abbot's face out of the corners of her eyes all the while. But so distracted was he by his cough that it wasn't till she came to telling him how she wished to benefit him

that she knew for sure he'd been listening to her, for then he gave a little smile, but it soon died away and his face darkened again.

It's the custom of our country to put ourselves into temptations, said he, so that we may be more pleasing in God's sight. I've done as others have done; and with God's grace came safely through many perils. I thank you for your heavenly thoughts of me, but I'm glad I was spared the pain of refusing the last trial, as I would have, for it's God's truth that it would have been no trial to me at all, as my condition makes plain to you. You're not satisfied with what I did, my lord, said she. I am so, the Abbot answered, but I've often had my doubts about the wisdom and the humanity of these same trials, and wondered if they were as pleasing in the sight of God as we think they are, and if we hadn't better accept mankind as God made it without trying to remake it for him ourselves. Let me see Marban and hear what he has to say for himself. Bring Luachet to me too; she may have a word to put in about her own transgressions. But as a stock she stood before him, having lost her wits entirely. Woman, will you be doing my bidding? And she went away, sure to find them, for hadn't she the sinners under lock and key?

We're greatly afeared, said the nuns one to the other, as soon as she was gone, that the news may be the undoing of the last thread of life. Now will you be looking at him dozing in his chair—wasted like the hills themselves, the monks answered. But will he be turning them into the wilderness as Abraham did Hagar? Blathnat asked, and before the monks could give her an answer the Abbess came back with the two of them—the girl crying, for she was right frightened, but Marban with a face on him grey as a stone until he caught sight of the Abbot.

I'm sorry, my Lord Abbot—— he began.

I'm at the end of the plank, Marban, but don't be thinking about my cough; pay no heed to it. We pray that God will spare you to us for many years, Marban answered. There are few years in front of me if there's a year itself, said the Abbot. But this is a bad tale they've been telling me about you. It is, indeed, a bad tale, so it is, in their minds, was the answer the Abbot got from Marban. Would you have me think that they told it falsely? the Abbot whispered. Stories are told and taken the way we understand them, Marban answered, and these women look on me as an evil-doer, it being true that I've broken the rule. But an evil-doer by nature I'm not, as you can learn for yourself if you'll write a letter to my own abbot. The monks beyond know me there day in and day out, and no man can be fooling a whole monastery day in and day out for ten years, as you will know, none better than yourself, my Lord Abbot; and they'll tell you that I was decent ever since I went to live with them and that they wouldn't take me nor make me out to be what the nuns think.

You would plead, Marban, said the Abbot, that there are transgressions against which no man's strength is enough; that the temptation might be increased till the saints themselves fall. But St. Anthony——

I'm not comparing myself with anyone, my Lord Abbot. All I want is to tell my tale and get it out of me. The Mother Abbess has told hers, and you've a right to tell yours; go on with it, said the Abbot. I thank you for that, Marban answered my Lord Abbot, and as for my story, you know most of it yourself as well as I do myself: that I left this country no more than a gossoon, not knowing a word about the way they crucify the body in this place for the love of God and to win a prize in heaven. I went away knowing nothing at all of the customs of the old country, and returned as ignorant of them as the day I took ship for Bordeaux, as I told

the Mother Abbess, and likewise too did I tell her that the custom of the temptations had been stopped in France in the years back, it not having been found to work well at all in France. But she told me Ireland was the land of saints and France was the land of lechers and wantons; and she said that I'd have to prove myself, and show what I was, and that, being a young man, she would let me off from the young sisters and would lie with me herself to give me an easier time.

I was shy, and that prevented me from saying no to her offer of the bed. I should have said no; but she would have thought I meant that what she said about France was true. I've no answer to make against the charge of cowardice nor any excuse on that head. And I've no answer to make against the charge of vanity, for after having proved I could stand up against the flesh and the devil in five combats I may have said to myself that I'd show these nuns how a man may live in holiness out of Ireland as well as in Ireland.

This idea of mine was helped maybe by the fact that I've lived a chaste life ever since I told to you, long ago, my lord, that I wanted to dedicate my life to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can get the truth of it from my own monastery, and you can get the proof of it here from the nuns themselves; ask of the nuns that lay with me, and every one'll tell you, if she doesn't tell a lie, that our embraces were according to the rule. It's not a small thing, my lord, and I'm telling you what you know yourself, for a young man to stand out against five women, one after the other, and all of them naked in his bed. If I'd been a bad one I'd have given in at the first go off to the lusts that every woman awakens in every man, but the nuns can tell you the same thing. I resisted the whole lot of them as well as the monks there around about you, and as well as you did yourself, my Lord Abbot. My son, said the Abbot, after he got a venomous cough

up out of his throat, we have all resisted the nuns at Crith Gaille. You were all well known the one to the other, my lord, and where there's no novelty there isn't much temptation, for it's novelty and strangeness is the devil's strongest weapon against man. The women here were all new to me, but I resisted them all, though I'm younger and a lot younger than the youngest man I see in front of me, and 'tis for that I'm confident and sure that I only speak the truth when I say that last night I fell to her who was destined for my arms, for my lips, and for my usage only.

Luachet is beautiful, but it wasn't her body altogether that drew me. Well, this much I can say with truth, that there is something beyond the lust of the eyes and the desire of the flesh, something that is beyond the mind itself, and maybe that thing is the soul; and maybe the soul is love, and whosoever comes upon his soul is at once robbed of all thought and reason, and becomes like a flower. It was like that with me when my mother told me about our Lord Jesus' appearance in Galilee, and about his suffering and his death, for you'll remember it, my Lord Abbot, that I went to yourself and told you that the love of Jesus was in my head ever since I heard the story from my mother, and that I wanted to lose myself in love of him. And last night I was carried away just as I was on that first occasion, and I somehow cannot believe it true that my love of her will rob me of my love of Jesus, nor that her love for me will rob him of her love, for in our hearts it is all one and the same thing, and aren't we more sure that God made our hearts than of anything else? It may be, Marban continued, after he had had a look round, that I did not know this always. It may be that yesterday I would have denied the truth of what I'm now saying to you all. All the same it is the truth I'm telling you, that when the door opened and

Luachet came into the room, the light of the candle that was in her hand shining on the white scriptures——

The scriptures tumbled out of her hand, the old Abbot interrupted.

They did not, my lord. She gave them to me, and they made plain to me that she is herself a good part of me, my scripture for ever, as long as this life lasts in me and, if I may say it without heresy, she'll be that for the life everlasting that's to come with our Lord Jesus Christ. As good doctrine as I've heard this many a day, said the Abbot, and what's true in it God will be no doubt taking into his own consideration when the time comes, but what answer will you be making when he comes to ask you about your broken vows? God knows as well as your Reverence that the ones that put on the vows can take off the vows, and as the journey before me is a long one, I'll be starting on it and it will hearten the pair of us to have the blessing of your hand and your voice if you will be giving it.

I can and I will give it. I'm with you both in this much that I hope the temptation that was put upon you will be put on no one else in my diocese.

My Lord Abbot, jerked in the Abbess, I'm thinking that you shouldn't be staying longer in the air, for there's a keenness in it, and a great draught, and your soup is ready in the house. My soup, I thank you for reminding me of it, Mother Abbess. Have you only scolding for me this day, your Reverence, and I sinking under the trouble? she said. Scolding? Have I not said, Mother Abbess, that I'm at the end of the plank, and the flesh is liable to a shiver or two when it comes to the last lep. Is it scolding you I am? I've this much to say, Mother Abbess, that I've had my doubts about these temptations for a long time, and it's often in my mind that at the heel of the hunt some poor girl would be left on her back.

He knew, said Alec, how to speak up to her, and as

small as a mouse making off through a chink in the wainscoting, she brought him up to his soup in the big room, tied a napkin round his neck, and sat watching him while he drank it. At another table the nuns were giving the monks their bit, saying: take a little piece of this, Father Bhendan; that bit won't lie heavy on the stomach. But there was no need at all, for they were all men of fine appetites and had gathered a lot of cold air into their bellies coming down from Bregen. It was Blathnat that was a bit forgetful of the guests, and seeing her making off, the nuns began to ask what she was after, passing on a wink and a word saying that she always had something in her head, but not guessing at all that Blathnat was thinking that it was a long journey from Mayo to Waterford, and a dangerous one, everybody except them in the monasteries going his own gait, and a lot of unfriendliness in the country, the same as now.

Well, she overtook them on the fringe of the forest and pushed a basket of bread over Marban's arm. It will soon begin to weigh heavy, said she, but Luachet will take her turn at it, and turn and turn about's fair play, and there is here within this basket what will take you to the Shannon if you're careful about the teeth. Now I must be off with myself; good luck to you. And with that she gave them both a kiss, and away with herself on her own road.

They stood watching the glimpses of her habit flying through the trees, and they silent enough, and when there was no more of her to be seen they stepped out on their journey that would take them long weeks, long months. We'll get to Waterford before the summer is out, said Marban, according to our luck. But Luachet, for she was no more than a child, didn't care how long the journey lasted, she being with her sweetheart, and the quiet forest all round them. They had not gone far before Marban remembered his hounds, and he would

have turned back for them but Luachet wasn't a bit sure that the Mother Abbess would let her go with him the second time, and she said she would die of fright if he left her in the forest by herself. Marban could only listen to her pretty talk and look down into her clear, childish eyes—still childish, for up to last night she knew nothing of life at all. And so they walked and wandered in the month of May, seeing the ferns uncurling and the speedwell showing between the ground ivy; and listening to all the singing birds and eating their bread where the banks were mossy.

We still hear the squeal of the badger in these parts, Alec said, and there were many more animals in ancient Ireland—bears, I believe, and wolves in plenty for sure, and it was the thought of these same beasts, and every one of them with a jowl and a jaw, that put the shadow on Marban's face—a shadow that distressed Luachet when she came running back to him with her hands full of ferns and wildings. You're not sorry you came away with me? she asked. He took her in his arms then and kissed her, and walking on together through the woods, they began speaking about the trees, and I can remember to this day the wonder that rose up in me when I heard my grandfather say that while sitting under a great oak, where they were to sleep that night, Luachet said to Marban: I don't like the oak; there's no welcome in it. The oak doesn't invite us to sit beneath its branches as the beech does. But Marban answered her: you mustn't be saying anything against the oak. And she said she would never speak against the oak again when she heard from him that the ribs of the ship that had brought Marban to Ireland were cut out of an oak-tree, and that the ribs of the ship that would take them to France would likewise be made of the oak. It's a good tree then, Luachet replied, and I shall be loving it better. But why don't you love it now? Marban asked her, and she replied:

it's that I'm thinking that there seems to be an unfriendly spirit inside of the tree we're sitting under. That's a queer thing to be saying, he said, and I'm thinking that you're saying hard things about the oak because it's leafless in the month of May; but in the heel of the season, when the acorns do be dropping through the still air, it is a rich and hospitable tree enough. Let the oak be friendly to the pigs but I would sooner be sitting under a beech-tree, was her answer to him. Well, that is strange, for the pigs love beech mast as well as oak mast. Now, Marban, will you be telling me what tree you're most disposed to, she said, for they must be all well known to you and you walking along through the forests from Waterford? What tree am I most disposed to? Marban said. Well, taking all in all, it's the holly, for it sheltered me in the cold March nights. And he called her to admire one near by under whose branches they would find it hard to squeeze themselves. And Marban never said a truer word than this, Alec interjected, as I know well myself; the holly is as good as a broken house to a man on a winter's night. Luachet thought that the leaves looked dark, and she didn't like the thorns, and later in the evening she stopped before a birch and said: that tree is more beautiful than the holly. And Marban answered her that the birch rose up as sweetly as Luachet's own body, and he said that the wind in the tree was as soft as her voice. It's the most musical of trees; his very words as reported by my grandfather, who got them from a book. Now what tree is that naked one? Luachet asked. That one, Marban answered, is the ash, the last one in the forest that the summer clothes. The most useful of the many that God has given us, he added, and to help the time away he told her it was the ash that furnished the warrior with fine spears. And when they came upon a hazel copse, he told her of the nuts that would be ripe for gathering

in the autumn. And when they came to some poplars, he said the poplar and the aspen were useless trees, one as the other, the poplar giving but poor shade to the warfarer, and the aspen not doing much better, a ragged, silly tree, shivering always as with ague. I like the willow better to-day than I did yesterday. How is that? she said. And he answered that as soon as they came to a willow he would tell her. See, he said, how faithfully they follow the brook, as faithfully as I shall follow you, Luachet, listening to your talk of your mouth, bending my ear to it, the way the willows listen to the rippling water. And she asked if there was no tree he did not love at all. He said there was one, the pine, for it sheds only a fibrous litter in which nothing grows. A pine wood is without birds or animals, the marten is the only animal one meets in a pine wood. My grandfather knew more about trees than any man I ever knew, and he'd go on telling about their qualities until you'd be tired. Alec, he'd say, you've been away; I'll talk to you no more. No, no; I've been listening ever so hard. Then tell me the quality of the alder. I remember it all but can't put words upon it; and then I'd tease him to tell me again of the ruined fort, in which Marban and Luachet spent the night, to be driven out of it at daybreak by the eagles, a nesting place it was for them birds, and at dawn they were screaming, frightening Luachet so that she couldn't do else than to climb into the limb of a tree overhanging the fort. And Marban was driven to follow her out by the birds.

A fine story that was to tell a boy, how, creeping out on the limb of the tree after her, she cried to him that the branch was breaking; but she cried out too late, and down the two of them tumbled, through a thicket much like the one in which I spied the Murrigan, coming down in the dry bottom all bleeding and torn; they were hardly able to drag themselves down to the brook, where

they stripped themselves of what clothes was left to them; and a fair sight it was to a boy's mind, the pair picking each other clean, or as clean as may be, for after a drop through a blackthorn thicket 'tis hard to get the last spikes out of you, as hard as it is to get the last rabbit out of a ditch. There's always one left, and it itching somewhere and in the sorest place in your body, you may be sure.

They journeyed on and spent the next night in a sheeling by a lonely lake, but there was a friendly woman in it, who shared a couple of eels with them. But begorra I'm forgetting to tell you about the fawn they took charge of. The wolves had had the doe, and the fawn was dying in the ditch; but the woman in the sheeling milked her goat, and after that drink of milk the fawn would not leave them, but kept springing after them, jumping over the bushes in front of them, delighting them with his agility and lying down by them at night. I don't rightly remember what became of this fawn; you'll have to look it out for yourself, sir, when you go to Dublin, in one of the old books where my grandfather found it, and you'll read in them some of the tales he used to be telling me of the madmen. Yourself must have known not a few of them in your childhood, for not later than fifty years ago they were common enough, the idiots going about the country with the beggars, an encouragement to the people to put their hands in their pockets. You've seen them, haven't you? And I answered that I had. Well, you can easily imagine, your honour, at the time I'm relating, when there was no madhouse at all in Ireland, but a great deal of wilderness, that the mad would be going astray from their relatives, living upon soles and holly berries and nuts from the hazel-trees, and cress from the springs, and how they would be finding but little nourishment from these and would be crying about the travellers they might come across for bread and meat;

and it was one of these madmen maybe that robbed the fawn from Marban and Luachet, who had come to love it, thinking of the time when they would be taking it back to France with them, and keeping it till it grew into a fine stag with horns upon it, reminding them of the eagles and the branches they had fallen through into the dry bottom, for though hurt, Luachet said herself, they would be thinking of this fawn and this journey to the day of their death. It must have been the madmen that stole the fawn from them, but I disremember.

And there was much more my grandfather used to tell of their adventures in the wilderness, how they came upon some women beating flax by a river-side, and how one laid down her scutch, saying she was feeling uneasy, as well she might, for she was going to have a child; and as she stood watching the river going by it dropped from her like an egg from a hen; there was no more about it. But your honour should have heard my grandfather tell of all the adventures that befell them in the monasteries on their way to the Shannon, how—but it would be wearisome to relate all the odds and ends: how they got across most of the road from Magh Line to Magh Li, from Magh Li to Ana Liffey, and passed through the wooded brow of Sliabh Fuaird till they reached Rathmor, and over Magh Aoi across bright Magh Luirg until they stepped across the mering of Cruachan, and how they footed it from Cruachan to Sliabh Cua and off again through Glaisgaile and southward through stony hills and curving paths until they were within a couple of days of the seaport.

A big ship will take us off there, he said, for now Luachet was sore in all her bones, and weary of the great wilderness they had been through, and weary of the monasteries they had rested in. Only one more forest, he said, lies between us and the sea; and after that the world is all fair valleys and pleasant hills and beautiful

trees that we shall sleep under in comfort and in love. And so did he comfort her and encourage her to bear the fag end of the journey. Now we're at the skirt of the last forest, he said. But he didn't say that it was in that forest he had heard wolves howling and snarling when he came up from Waterford on his way to Crith Gaille, and that he might have left his bones there had it not been for the hounds that were with him. His hope was that the wolves might be seeking their food in some other forest, so he said nothing until, as the day drooped and the darkness gathered into the branches, he stopped to listen.

There's a howling near by, she said; would that be a wolf or a dog? A wolf it is, he replied. It's on our own tracks; and he's calling to his fellows, and they'll be after us soon. We must be looking round, Luachet said, for a tree to climb into. But this wood is a pine wood, said she, and there isn't a branch of the branches within our grip. Oh, Marban, are we to be eaten and devoured by wolves?

CHAP. XXIII.

SO Luachet and Marban were devoured by wolves, Alec? I'm sorry for that. All the rest of your story I like very much—the Bregen monks sending to the Pyrenean monastery for hounds, they having themselves run out of hounds owing to a dispute with a king about a piece of land; that motive brings Ireland up before us—a quarrel over a piece of land! Excellent. And all the different episodes told faithfully and candidly without immodest insistence. Excellent! And the last, Marban's vindication, a masterpiece! Your honour is very kind to speak to me like that, but tell me why you don't like the end of the story as well as the beginning. Because, Alec, I suspect that an ecclesiastic unleashed the wolves.

It would never do to allow a pair of lovers to go away to the Pyrenees to live happily in broken vows. So you think, your honour, that the story did not come down unchanged from father to son? I'm not saying it didn't, Alec, only—— But isn't yourself the great story-teller, and should be knowing better than another what end a story should be taking? How would you have me alter the story? Faith and troth, Alec, in that question you have me bet, for Ireland was full of wolves at that time, and it would be well-nigh a miracle not to be overtaken by a pack of them fellows. . . . Let me think. The alternative is: babies in the Pyrenees. Marriage bells there could not be, unless Marban went to Rome and got relief from his vows. Now that I come to think of it, the end of your story seems to me to be the right one. A sad and a cruel end; but it may have fallen out just as you relate it. The only thing I regret is that we have not all the adventures of the lovers in the wilderness before the end came.

Well, sir, I've told it the way I got it from the grandfather, just as he used to tell it when he was in the humour for dreaming over the old Ireland of long ago, and he had it from his father or from the old writings. for he was reading every evening in the National Libraries in Dublin, leaving me after his supper to go away to the library, or maybe taking me with him: 'tis many an hour I've spent sitting by him, kicking my heels and wearying of the place. Your grandfather—— I began. —was away in the country looking after the farm. You see, sir, the grandfather was the second son, and the elder brother, Patrick, got the farm; and when he died without children he left it to his wife, and when she passed away, God be merciful to her soul, the farm came to the grandfather, who had been a clerk in Dublin ever since he was twenty. Before that he was a clerk in Castlebar, without knowledge of the country at all. He would have

sold the lease, thirty-one years and three lives, only that my father, who was then a lad of seventeen, said: let me go down and work the farm for you. Which he did, making a fair profit from the first. He got married soon after that. I was born and reared on the farm, but was always a botch at a fair, and, seeing how it was, the father thought it would be better for me to follow after my grandfather, who got me a job in his office when I was about fifteen, and I was a messenger boy there till I was twenty. Then that grandfather died, leaving me just what took me to America in search of a fortune. At that time people used to be talking about America, and the great things that were doing there. So you went to America, Alec? I did, your honour, and was at all sorts of work, till the sun caught me in the nape of the neck, and I travelling in the dry goods line in Mexico.

But so empty is my mind of any Mexican memories that my attention must have been drawn from Alec's narratives by the rising and falling lines of the Westport hills, all beyond reproach except perhaps the too symmetrical Croagh Patrick, for the next time I heard him he was saying that he didn't believe that there was another such queer place as Ireland anywhere in the whole world. I replied: I am with you, and not less queer in the past than in the present. Ireland is a poor place, he said, compared with what she once was, and we talked politics for a while. But in no place, he interjected suddenly, has there been such grand saints as in Ireland. Where else would you find——?

All the same, Alec, in the stories you've told me they've shown themselves as weak as ourselves might have been if we had been exposed to the same temptations. Isn't that so?

Alec seemed unwilling to commit himself to an opinion on this point, and, after some equivocation, began to tell me there had always been grand saints in Ireland, men

who had gone into temptations, the temptation of food and drink and of women, and had resisted them all. Did your honour never hear of Father Scothine? he said suddenly.

I had to confess that I had not, and the admission, although given reluctantly, with apologies for long years of absence from Ireland, seemed to cause him some disappointment and drew from him the reflection that Irishmen live out of Ireland the best part of their lives usually. But Ireland, I said, is always with us wherever we are, and perhaps Ireland was never nearer to you than the years you were in Mexico. True for you, he interjected; and Ireland, I continued, is always in my mind, whether I live in Paris or in London. I'm sure it is, your honour, for your father was a good Irishman, God rest his soul.

And now will you be telling me the story of Father Scothine?

His eyes, of uncertain blue, were fixed upon me, and I said to myself: he is asking himself if he ought to tell the story of Father Scothine to a man who has been so long out of Ireland, who is no better than an Englishman; or is he, I continued, thinking the story out afresh, shaping it to the idea that holy Ireland entertains of herself, putting a good skin on the lie, as himself would word it; and to interrupt him in the fabrication of a homily, if he were engaged on one, I asked him suddenly if he could tell me what kind of man Father Scothine was. A story, I said, gains in interest if we can see the characters plainly; one should have them in one's mind all the time whilst listening to a story.

CHAP. XXIV.

I'VE always heard my grandfather say, he answered, that Father Scothine was the strongest man in the County

Mayo in his young days, great at hurling and throwing the stone and in all the sports; six feet and some inches, he was, with a head on him as round as the balls that top the pillars before a landlord's gateway. Big hands, long feet and the eyes of them that fear hell, for though he was the holiest man in or out of Ireland, Scothine lived in fear of hell always, and it was this fear sent him out of his village, and away from his chapel, into the wilderness.

And did he learn in the wilderness, I asked Alec, that he was not to go to hell, and was it the knowledge that he was saved brought him back to his village?

I'm not able to answer that question, sir, Alec answered. I can only tell you the story the way I got it from the grandfather, and from what he said I think Scothine didn't bother himself a lot about miracles or visions, but that he was troubled with a great fear of hell that now and again slackened and left him in peace and at other times gripped him entirely and sent him climbing the trees for a lodging out of the way of the wolves. That was how he used to live out in the crags and up in the trees when the fear took hold of him, along with the thought that he was losing his soul in village idleness, doing nothing but saying a Mass now and again when the people required it. But when the fear wasn't on him he was as soft and quiet and sensible a man as you could meet in a long day's walk. A thick, heavy lump of a lad, taking things easy and saying his Mass like another priest on Sunday. The only difference between him and the other priest was that it was rare he missed saying Mass on weekdays. His eating and drinking, it's true, was never the same as other men's, for when he was in the village he lived very much as he did in the wilderness, his diet being seldom more than cress, which he would gather himself from the spring, and a few acorns from the oaks in autumn and a fistful of hazel nuts.

When there were no more of these he lived on rye bread, and didn't touch the meat except on Christmas Day. That puts me in mind of the leg of mutton. He ate one, and it tormented his conscience the way he took the pledge never to chew meat again, but not wishing to make Christmas Day like any other day, he would let you give him a trout from the river on Christmas Day or an eel out of a bog hole. The rest of the year he went meatless, lowering his health until he got sick, and it being dinned into his ears that he was killing himself, which no Christian is permitted to do, he let them give him a pot of broth. The same broth did him a power of good, and he got back the health in a few days, but no sooner was he on his legs again than his conscience began to worry him about the broth, and once more the thought caught hold of him that he must be hiding to save the soul he would be losing if he stayed another day in the village. Off he went to hide in a place called Glenn o' Goshleen. You may have seen it, sir, for it was part of your father's property; it was sold in the famine years; a beautiful place that was in Father Scothine's time, with woods all over the Partry hills, and in these woods he hid himself, and there he lived for months, dodging away from everybody, afraid they might bring him things to eat, or put a roof over his head, which they might have done too if they could have found him, for he was well thought of. But being as artful as a pet fox, he was able to keep his distance, and when people began to think he was dead in the woods, and to forget him, he was making his way round the bend of the lake across the country, never stopping till he came to the naked crags above the salt water, a place that is now known as Oldhead, but what they called it in the time gone by I disremember. He lived there on gulls' eggs and the mussels and winkles that he picked up on the shore, lying out every night on the naked crags, doing penance for his sins. What they

were, sir, I cannot tell you: vapours of the brain, I'd say, and no more than that. One day the vapours left him, and he went back to his parish and did his share of shriving and saying Mass and reading the gospels, as quiet a man as you'd find in the whole of Ireland, and everybody thinking the old madness had left him. He was the same mind himself, if he thought about it at all. All we know is that his mother came to see him, and she said: everything must seem to you like a dream. And he said: like a dream it is, maybe, but our dreams are as much a part of ourselves as our waking moments. And a solemn look came into his face, and his big eyes rolled in their sockets. It would be better, mother, said he, according to the talk that's going, not to be judging anything, but to be always doing something and mortifying this flesh, which will drag souls down into hell if we are not subduing it day in and day out. You see, sir, his mind was the same as it always had been, only hell wasn't quite so plain to him as it was the time he ran off to Glenn o' Goshleen or got among the crags at Oldhead. He was always a bit afraid that he was doing wrong, and it was at this time of quiet, the greatest he ever knew in his life, that a vision came to him, and he sitting underneath an oak-tree by the river-bank, watching the water go by. A pleasant place the same place is now, for that matter. The same oak may be standing yet, for I've heard tell that an oak will live a thousand years. A willow is not so lasting a tree, but belike them that are now standing are from the seed of those that were drooping to the river in Scothine's day. That was his favourite place for hatching out his thoughts, and seeing him sitting there so much at home among the birds, the word went that he had learnt the talk of the birds in Glenn o' Goshleen, which is a strange story enough, but not stranger than that a man should build himself a nest in the fork of a tree, and that the

pigeons in the branch above him should come and go and feed their chicks without minding him. As much as the birds he loved the beasts—the foxes and the badgers—and they came to him out of their holes, and the gulls came to him from the sea; and there were ducks and geese and wild swans on the river, and he would listen to them chattering away at each other when the south wind blew. And there were otters in the stream, and he used to be sorry when the otter slid down into the water and came up with a fish in his mouth, but he never interfered with them. I take the water-grass and he takes the fish, he would say. But he liked the badgers that lived up in the woods better than the otters, for the badgers ate the roots and hurt no one. You see the sort of man he was, a gentle and happy lad, fearing his own kind more than he feared the wolves and the bears, for in Scothine's day bears and wolves were as plentiful as weasels are nowadays, and martens were hopping from branch to branch in the pine-trees, and they after the birds. He was unhappy when he found the wings and the breast feathers of a wood-pigeon, and would look at them sadly, saying: was it a marten that did the deed, or was it a hawk? As for the robins, they never left him alone; the blackbirds and the thrushes knew him and trusted him, the way that they would take bread out of his hand when he had any to give, which was often enough, for he used to go without the bit himself so that he might have something for the shuler and the wandering rogues, and he'd only keep for his own jaw a few acorns that he'd pick up; a poor diet, and many's the belly-ache he got on the head of it, I'd say. But he didn't mind, claiming that God knew better what was good for him than he did himself. It was on one of the fast days, while sitting under the oak, with his eyes on the river, and he not seeing it at all, for his thoughts were away in the desert whither Jesus, our Lord, had gone to be

alone, and where he met the devil, who told him he'd give him all the kingdom of earth if he'd fall down and adore him, a great lie, your honour, for the devil hadn't got the kingdom of earth to give our Lord Jesus Christ, who is himself possessed of all that is in the heaven above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. I mayn't have the devil's own exact words, your honour, but I'm thinking the gist of it was that if our blessed Lord would bow down and worship him he could have whatever he liked in this world; perhaps no mention was made of heaven at the time. Scothine was thinking the devil must have been a bit artless that time, and should have known that Jesus would answer him: thou must not tempt the Lord thy God, the way he did answer him. All the same, said Scothine to himself, it must have been a great temptation to the Lord Jesus not to turn the stones into bread, and he doing a fast for forty days and forty nights, and hungry enough, I'll go bail, at the end of it, but he had promised his Father that the spirit should not yield to the flesh, and he wouldn't go back on that, and his Father had promised to reward him by raising him from the dead after three days' burial.

It was while thinking on this temptation that Scothine came to say to himself: I wish God would send the devil to tempt me, and I sitting here, so that I would make sure of resisting the temptation, and getting a high place in glory hereafter for my own self. Let the devil appear, he said, and I'll manage somehow to give him a fall.

It was in the shape of a black man with goat's feet and a scut of a tail that Scothine expected to see the devil, but the devil suits his shape to the job he's on, and this time he took the shape of a beautiful woman, come up through the willow-trees from the river. She stood, in his vision, smiling, and beckoning him to follow her into the woods. Maybe his mind was wandering, and maybe

he as upset by the hunger, but he got on his feet and took after her up the path. He hadn't gone far before she disappeared into the willows, and he heard a mocking laugh that gave him the fright of his life, and set him wondering if God had answered his prayer and sent the devil to him indeed. He wasn't sure either that he had rightly resisted the devil, for hadn't he looked after the vision eagerly, and the one that looks after a woman hath committed adultery with her in his heart; the same being what our Lord said, or nigh to it. Scothine would have the words off better than I. He went home with his heart going pit-a-pat, like a duck's foot in mud, from the fright he got, and he thinking and asking himself whether he ought to go back to the crag of the gulls and live there for a year on raw eggs or the leavings of the fish that the birds didn't want, guts and the like; or if he ought to go to Glenn o' Goshleen and eat water-grass and oak apples, and sleep up in a tree at the heel of the day out of harm's way of the wolves, the prowlers. The morrow would settle all that, said he, but something ought surely to be done at once in the way of penance and mortification. He could not think of a thing except to strip himself to the buff and, going to his cupboard, he took out the scourge; but he could not do more, it seemed, than to tickle himself with the lash, and the man that he used to pay wages to beat him beforetimes, until the blood would run down his hams and his shanks, had gone back with himself to his own parts. Scothine had no mind, and no time, to go looking for another man to lay on with the scourge, he was that worried by the persecution going on in his head, one time his thought saying that it wasn't water-grass and oak-falls, nor prayers at all hours of the night and day, nor scourgings and weltings by his own hand or the hand of another that he wanted, but a big temptation that he might be standing out against, and so be giving great pleasure to God Almighty. And the

hunger of this great temptation became stronger day after day, till the prayer was never off his lips that God would send the devil back to him. Night and morning he would cry to God in his prayers: give me my chance now. Give me another chance. And he spent a deal of time thinking of the words he would utter out against the devil, and he didn't take as much as a walk without a bottle of holy water to dash in the devil's face, or without a rosary to cast over him if he came near enough. Scothine had a plan how he would lure the devil near till he could lasso him with the rosary, like they lasso and catch the wild cattle in Mexico. Won't he give a kick and a lep when he feels it drooping over his ears, he kept saying to himself. For the rosary he had brought out with him had been blessed by the Pope of Rome, and while he was wriggling out of it Scothine thought that he'd spit in his face and jeer at him, and call him names.

This prank that he was going to play on the devil made him as happy as a lark, until at last he began to say to himself: the year wastes after July, and I wish God would give me my chance before the year is out. He hadn't forgotten that the devil came to him looking like a woman; and he was real vexed to think he had gone after her, for he wasn't sure by any means that he had the rosary in mind at the time. It was just curiosity, that's what it was, he muttered to himself, on his way to his favourite seat under the oak. Still, and all the same he was bothered and vexed, for his thoughts were like a swarm of bees in his head the way he couldn't tell himself what he was thinking about, one thought flying away and another one coming into his head at the same moment, so that there was never such a going and a coming in this world before. At one moment it was the great reward he would be gaining in heaven, and the minute after it was the great punishment he would be getting in purgatory, or singeing and grizzling on the hob of hell,

for mind you, Scothine was not sure at all that if the devil had come along with horns and hooves, and a nose like a chimney, all smoke and smuts, and his tail hanging out, that he would have been so anxious to get up and go after him the way he went after the woman. I might have let my liver drop out of me with the fright, he said to himself, and I wasn't frightened a bit. How was that now? Why was it, said he, that I stood all up and down like a poplar-tree to look at a woman with her clothes off? He used to keep his eyes sideways and baw-ways when he was talking to a woman, the way he wouldn't see her, even if it was his own mother. . . . Yet the memory of this woman's larky eye, and the two breasts lifting out of her, could not be rooted out of his mind anyhow, nor the memory of her backside, that was like a great white mushroom, as she vanished away through the willows. But the breasts were better in his memory than all the rest of her, and maybe it's the breasts is the part a man has to struggle against if he wants to get the old soul safe for an eternity of happiness: God above the lot; Jesus on the right-hand side, his blessed mother on the left, and all the angels parading around, and they having the great time.

While he was thinking these things he heard a splash in the water, and there he saw a girl with a pair of the finest tits a man could wish to be looking at. Scothine, thinking the devil had come back to him, felt in his girdle for the holy water and the rosary, which was to make the devil get into his own shape. He got hold of both these weapons against the Evil One, and he stole down to the edge of the river and made ready. Faith and troth, said he, that's not the devil, bad luck to it, but it's the eldest daughter of the female that lives in the cottage at the bend of the river. Up he lepped again on the bank and away with him to the ford, stepping gingerly over the stones, as a man must on his way to salvation, fearing he

would be drowned before he was saved. Now, says he, to the woman who was feeding her pigs, leave feeding the pigs, let the pigs be, for I've come to talk to you about a thing that's more important than pigs. Sure, I can be listening to you while I'm throwing the food to the animals, and they ready to eat their own ourbeens off with the hunger, she said. Well, said Scothine, for there was nothing in his head but the idea of how to get a soft seat in heaven, a red and golden chair, with a doeskin pad filled with goose feathers: is there another red-headed girl in the parish beyond your own daughter? There is not, she answered, not one with a head of hair like that head. She's in the river, said Scothine. She is so, said the woman, since the dawn of day, leaving me to do the work; she and her sister, as big an idler as herself, the pair of straps; up and down, and in and out of the same river they do be going, splashing about all the summer-time as if it were ducks they was, and not Christian females. It's a great loss to me, the bathing. Did they go and interrupt your Reverence, and they splashing, for if that's what you've come about, I'll give them a leathering when they come home, and it won't happen the second time. It isn't that, Scothine answered, that I've come to talk to you about, but to tell you this, that your daughter has a pair of breasts on her would raise great temptation in a man. That's the truth itself, the woman said; they're the fullest I've ever known on a girl of her age, as I'm always telling the clergy that comes here seeking a temptation. Is that the way it is? said Scothine. There's them have been after her before me. But which of them has that right to lie with her as I have earned myself by such terrible fastings and prayers in more woods and wildernesses than you could reckon on your fingers and toes? Who has a better right? Will you tell me that now? That much I'll say for myself, so you may send her to me, and to no one else. Why

should I send her to you, more than to another? Distracted I am and moidhered with people asking for the loan of my daughters to be a temptation to the flesh, and it all comes from the sporting and tumbling they do be going on with in the river. I'll put a stop to it. I will so. They won't see water again as long as they live; they will not. My good woman, Scothine answered, don't be forgetting that it was God put the breasts on the women. Are you telling me that? said she. And what do you think he planted them there for? For she was one of them who wasn't backward in coming forward, even to the priests. For the suckling of babes, I always thought, but listen to yourself—— It was for that surely, Scothine interrupted, and for more than that; for, let you deny it if you dare, that God in his wisdom knew about the temptation they might be before the children came, and what I've come for is to ask you to let me have the loan of your daughter to lie with me, for, from the peep that I had through the bushes, her breasts are just the ones that might awaken the devil in me, if there's any devil left in me.

Woman is the temptation of the temptations, so I've heard, not from knowledge, mind you, having been busy till now with the conquest of my belly; all temptations rise out of the belly, the woman as well as the victual and the drink. The pleasure of food and drink I've passed and done with, for I live on water-grass from the spring and oak balls from the oaks, as well as you do yourself with the meat and the mead. Plain water I drink without as much as a wish rising in me for a slug of ale. Nor are the scourgings and weltings I give myself any use; my flesh doesn't heed them, and the man who would scourge yells out of me one time has left the country; gone he is, and here am I without a temptation to my name unless you let your daughter lie with me; you won't get out of it, yourself, my good woman, unless you

send her to me, mind you that; for it is on me you've got to reckon to be readying your place in heaven for you. And, said he, if I get lazy and lob around with my bum on a warm stone, I'll be in purgatory for my sins after you are dead yourself, and what's going to intercede for you or bother their brains about you at all? Get me to heaven as quick as it can be managed, or maybe you'll howl in hell like a dog with hot water on his tail.

You're a great saint, Father Scothine, said the woman; you are so, and high enough will you be perched up in the kingdom of heaven without making a step-ladder of my daughter's two breasts. 'Tis on my shoulders you and your daughters will be hoisted up, that's the way it is, each one helping the other and the priests helping the most. You're wiser, I'm thinking, about the way to get a crown on your head than I could be, that have never known anything but a handkerchief tied under my chin, but I'll not be giving my daughter to lie with you. I will not; and there I leave it. God knows what might happen to her in a sudden weakness such as we're all liable to, and it in the blood. Now, my good woman, I'm not sure if you're thinking about me or about your daughter. I think the thoughts are in my own head, and this I say, Father Scothine, that the sin is the same to the one that is atop as to the one that is below. You might be in the right of it, Scothine answered humbly, for he was one of those men who think the next one to him is wiser than himself, and to escape from the persecution of his thoughts, which were about him again like a swarm of bees, he turned away. Don't be in that much of a hurry, the woman cried after him. My curse on the bathing in the river, but I'll give you your chance the way we'll all get to heaven. Wouldn't it do you as well to lie between my two daughters? They would be keeping each other company in the temptations and helping each other to make it hot for you, and to keep out of it themselves.

Ah, said Scothine, you're cutting my danger in two halves, and I the sort that likes to feel the bones and the brunt of the business, but since it cannot be, send me the pair of them to-night, and I'll have them again on Saturday week, and every Saturday from this on, if I feel the strength in me to stand temptation. Not a sparrow is hatched in the nest but the Lord provides food for it, and he will provide me with strength once a week to resist and hold out and get over the temptation. Send the pair of them to me at the close of day. Well, said the woman, when the priest was out of sight, heaven must be a great place, since a man has to go through all the fastings and prayers that Father Scothine has been through, and now he's putting his head into a noose.

I must be telling Dare and Lalloc not to pull that noose too tight, or by this and by that, with breasts like Dare's even him that feeds upon water-grass and nuts, like a pet lamb, might be learning the tricks of a buck goat, and who knows that my girl might not fall in with him just at the right time, and then there would be the devil to pay surely. But whichever way we look, danger there is, and the saint must have his temptations; he must indeed; he refused a shoulder of kid last week; he'd refuse anything, that man would.

As soon as the girls came up from their dipping she instructed them: they were to lie with the saint on Saturday night for the good of his soul, and as we are walking to Mass, says she, you'll be telling me what happened to you, without forgetting anything, or I'll break both your backs. Without forgetting as much as a nod or a wink, they answered her, and the story they told of the great fight the saint put up against temptation was so wonderful that she sent them up every Saturday night to him. And in this way Scothine rose every Sunday morning from his bed greater in the eyes of the Lord than the night before.

But you know, sir, there are bad tongues wagging everywhere, and when the news of the saint's martyrdom, and of miracles performed by him and the girls themselves, who came to him with red coals in their bibs, the coals not scorching them at all, reached the Bishop, he began to scratch his head and to think he must try and put a stop to the talking. He sent his chaplain, one Brenainn.

Can you tell me, Alec, what sort of man the chaplain was? I'd like to have the two priests before my eyes. Sure I can, Alec answered blithely. He was a spongy little man, with eyes like sloes, and great red lips that he kept licking with a big coarse tongue all the while. You could hear him licking, for he licked with a click, setting Scothine against him at first. But he was a friendly fellow, and the friendliness in his heart couldn't be held back. And he was a merry chap too, so these qualities made up for the looks which were against him, and it wasn't long before Scothine began to feel that life was lying easier upon him. The sun was shining into the room, and the sweet air. going and coming in and out of the half-door and Brenainn was telling so pleasantly that the Bishop didn't believe the report, but would like to have it from Scothine direct that he didn't lie every night between two girls with pointed breasts.

Not every night surely, for the man isn't alive in Ireland that could be without his night's rest all through the week, and he in pain, restlessness, and in such discomfort that I cannot put words on it, Brenainn. It is only the Mass I say on Sunday gives me the courage to bear up at all. So that is the story I'm to carry home to the Bishop? Brenainn said. That's the tale, and the story, and the truth. The truth is sometimes hard to believe, Brenainn answered; but, my dear Scothine, I do not doubt a word of it, and getting it from yourself, but those that get it from me—— What will they be saying?

Scothine answered. But what matters it what they will be saying if I'm winning a place in heaven for myself? And let you be doing the same, Brenainn, this night of all nights, and God giving you the chance. Not a sparrow falls without his will, well you know it. It was for this you were sent here, to lie between two girls with pointed breasts. Why not, he continued, if thereby you please God? Aren't we here for that? Brenainn turned his eyes from Scothine. You're not saying anything, Scothine said. And Branainn, who did not wish to be behindhand, or to show himself a coward before Scothine, replied: well, since you say there are two, I'll try it, and with the help of God I'll come out on the right side of the bed. Brave words are these, Scothine answered, but mind you, Brenainn, her breasts are round and white, for all the world like little mushrooms come up in the night at the ring of day, and her backside like a big one; and he kept on telling of her temptations, not to make himself out a great man for having overcome them but to frighten Brenainn, for though Scothine was the gentlest of human beings there was malice at the bottom of the box, and he enjoyed the fear that he was reading all the time on Brenainn's face while he kept the talk going, asking Brenainn if there was any word in his parish about Brian Boru, who had come out of the forest with a remnant of his followers to redeem Ireland from the Danes. But it doesn't much matter to the story I'm telling what their talk was about. As likely as not it was stray talk, that people drop into when they have something else on their minds, and it went on until each felt he wouldn't be able to bear it much longer.

So it was a relief to both when the girls poked their heads through the half-door. But when they saw Father Brenainn up went their eyebrows, and round they popped, and away with themselves. Scothine called after them, but they were half-way across the field, and he had to

pick up his cossack and go after them. You would run away, would you? You would leave a holy man without his temptation, you would do that? he was saying, as he brought them in. Sure we didn't know, Father, the girls cried out; and let go our ears, or we'll never give you a tempt again. Now sit you down, will you, and I'll give you a news will surprise the pair of you. How would you like to hear that the talk going round is that the three of us are living together in sin? Would they say the like? the girls yelped out together. Aren't there the wicked people to say the like of that, and we giving up all fun and diversion, and breaking our backs to get here every Saturday night, and getting pains in our heads trying to torment yourself the way God may be pleased, and you holding yourself in? It's no work for a girl, or a pair of girls; it is not, and God knows it. That sounds like the truth, don't it? Scothine asked Brenainn. It does so, said Brenainn. That has the ring. I'm satisfied with that. And my little sister too, said Dare. Let you Lalloc here be telling the truth to the Bishop's legate, about the temptations we've been giving to Father Scothine, and how hard put we were to keep them up and we wanting to go asleep. There's no need for her to tell him, said Scothine, for you'll be lying with him this night instead of with myself, and I'll back you to give him as good as you give me, and good you gave it. We'll do that surely, the girls replied. Isn't it plain to you now, Brenainn, that they are talking out of their own mouths and not out of mine? It's plain, Brenainn answered; it is plain. And he said he wished he was as sure of heaven as Scothine, but that he wasn't a bit sure, and he would have been out of the house and away on the minute if Scothine hadn't got a grip of his arm. The Bishop mightn't believe you, said Scothine; he might say, or there's them might say it for him, that we'd been fooling you up to the two eyes. Lie with the girls to-night; do the deed the

way I did it, for only in that way can we keep our characters in this world of the tongues, and be straight with the Bishop. Out of your own sight and hearing, said Dare; and, wiping her eyes, Lalloc repeated: the only fair way, your Reverence. If you don't our characters will be lost for ever, and a girl without her character has no chance in life.

He'll do it, Scothine said, and, pushing Brenainn before him up the stairs, he called to the girls to light the censers. What are the censers for? Brenainn asked. We will pray together that strength may be given to you, and no sooner were these words out of his mouth than the girls came up the stairs singing a psalm, as was their wont when Scothine was the penancer, and after seeing that the bed was easy if Brenainn should escape from his tormentors in sleep, which might happen, for he had come a long way on foot, Scothine bade them all good-night and closed the door behind him, rejoicing, good man though he was, at the suffering and the trouble would be put on Brenainn that night.

But he wasn't more than half-way down the first flight of stairs when he was stopped by a sudden little whisper in his ear. It was his good angel come to tell him that he had been listening to his bad angel all the time, taking one for the other, as you can easily do if you're not careful, for the bad one puts on the whisper of the good one at times, and after listening for a while Scothine thought he ought to go and offer his peaceful bed to Brenainn and lie himself in the hot place, he being better able to bear the temptation. But there seemed to be a hand in the darkness keeping him back, pushing him down the stairs, and down he went step by step saying to himself that after all he wasn't putting anything on the man that he hadn't borne with himself; and asking himself why should he be patting himself on the back and thinking that he was a grander man than Brenainn. It is the evil angel

surely putting these thoughts into my mind, he said; and it wasn't long before he was asking himself whether it was because he wanted to get the better of Brenainn that he had shoved him into danger. Get the better of Brenainn! Scothine cried out as he stood by his bed-side. Why should I want to do the like? But there's no help for it now, what is done is done, and there's the end of it, he said, and he lay down in the bed. But his thoughts kept him awake, tumbling over each other all the night like waves in the bay, so afraid was he that he might have done the wrong thing in landing Brenainn into the midst and middle of temptation, a thing which is permitted for no man to do, for no one knows another man's strength, only God knows that. But if the devil should worst him in the battle my prayers and fastings will be wasted, and it will be an easy job for him to lose the game with a girl like Dare lying alongside of him. But is that sure? She'll tell him if he gets wild that he must lift up the window and stand in the cistern till he gets cool; but if Dare should fall asleep the devil may get hold of the little one, who would put her arms about Brenainn's neck and tempt him to sin with her, for she's but a child, and has no more than a smattering of religion as yet, and if Lalloc falls asleep Dare may stick a temptation on to poor Brenainn which his strength is not great enough to resist. We're all liable to strong weaknesses, Dare like the rest, like her mother Eve.

If I was wrong, O great and merciful God, in whose girdle is the key of purgatory's gate, tell me if I've done wrong in letting Brenainn lie in my place to-night. There's no key to hell's gate, I know, for it's always open; wide it is, and gaping, but it isn't hell that I've been deserving, for my act wasn't heinous, but only a while in purgatory, and out of that dismal place thou wilt give me a free pass. Well I've earned it by my fastings and prayers which are written down in the Great Book, and

the days I spent on the crags picking up a gull's egg out of the nest or a clutch of dulce from the shore.

And when Scothine had come to the end of the prayers and his lamentations he gave a great cry out of him, and, unable to bear with his fears any longer, he jumped out of the bed, saying: I can stick it no longer. I must find out whether God or the devil got the best of it in the next room or if nobody won yet. But no sooner was he on his legs than a weakness fell upon him which he couldn't understand, for there was little strength in him and he couldn't as much as walk away from the bed. It seemed to him that it must be the devil was holding him back. Gripped I am and held I am, he said, and he was shaken with a great fear and a squeamy feeling in the insides, so that he did not know whether he ought to go back to his bed or what to do. I'll pray, said he. I'll pray, for that's the last resource of the sinner, and falling on his knees he began praying, without knowing what he was praying about, and his prayers went on and on, himself all in the dark about them. He didn't feel his knees under him, though the hours of the night were going by, nor the cold of the morning, though he was in his pelt.

CHAP. XXV.

THE sun had risen above the mountains and he was still praying that Brenainn might come out of the fiery furnace a better man than he went in. Dear God, let him not be tempted too much, he was saying to himself; not above his strength, dear God, for I've been thy faithful servant this many a year, and the temptation of pointed breasts and smooth limbs is great to a man of his years, although he be but a roll of lard to look at; he's young, dear God, he is young and unprepared for the temptation by a long diet of water-grass and nuts. Another long cry burst from him, and he was starting off on another prayer, when

a knock came on the door. Scothine rose to his feet, and, thinking it was the girls come to him with news of Brenainn, he went to meet them. But it was Brenainn himself come to tell him that the girls had gone home an hour ago and that Scothine ought to be dressing himself if he was going to say Mass.

I've stayed on a bit, he continued, so that I may be serving your Mass for you. You had a fine easy night of it, Scothine, he said, and have overslept yourself. Overslept myself! said Scothine. Why shouldn't you be oversleeping yourself, and you lying quiet in the comfortable bed? said Brenainn, and he turned away gloomily. The thought was in Scothine that the gloom on Brenainn's face might be the shadow of the sin he had committed during the night, but he said nothing about that, only: I'll be with you presently. Brenainn hadn't been out of the room long before Scothine fell on his knees again to pray to God that any sin Brenainn had committed might not be visited upon him. But what's done cannot be undone, he said to himself; there's the end of that, he said, whatever way it went, and rising from his knees, and beginning to dress himself, he shouted over the banisters to Brenainn that he wouldn't be delaying long and that Brenainn might start off to the chapel and ring the bell.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE people up from the village, as they watched Scothine reading the Mass to the right and to the left, thought that his face was pale and full of weakness, and they feared he would be overcome and that Brenainn would have to finish the Mass for him. But he stuck it out and went right on. And when he came to the Communion it was a relief to him to put the Host on the tongues of Dare and Lalloc, for he didn't think they'd have taken it if there had been sin, and he continued to put his trust

in God till the end of the Mass. And after the Mass the two priests went into the house and ate their breakfast without a word passing, until Scothine said: and what message will you be taking back to the Bishop about me? You're the greatest saint in Ireland, Brenainn answered, and that's what I'll tell the Bishop. I'll tell him that same. I hope that some part of what you say is the truth, Scothine answered, and he ate two or three mouthfuls of oatcake. In those days oatcakes was the breakfast fare, with a noggin of ale or milk, for not a drop of tea was in Ireland, as your honour knows, till centuries after. Scothine only drank water himself, but he had a noggin of milk to offer Brenainn, who seemed glad of it. He may be a saint after all, Scothine said to himself; and my innocence must be plain to him by the maidenheads of the girls; but he didn't like to ask Brenainn about the thing, though his heart was sick, and his thoughts were teasing him like bees, one stinging him here and another there till he was stung all over. At last Brenainn said: well, I must be going; the day wastes after midday and I've a long way before me. I'll take a cake along with me. Take two; take three or four; you won't be at your door till dark, and now the thought is upon me that your way through the forest is full of danger. You may be overtaken by the evening wolves, or you may fall in with robbers. What do you say to preparing yourself for your death by kneeling down there and making your confession?

Faith, he said, I will; and down he plumped on his two knees. Wait a bit, Scothine cried, till I get my stole, and when he had it on he was sure of knowing the truth. Now tell me, how did things pass with you last night? I didn't know, Brenainn answered, till the door was shut upon myself and the girls that I would have to lie with them and keep myself from temptation the best I could. Nor did I know if I'd be able, and when they were

stripped, I said: glory be to God, will I get out of this, or will my soul be roasted on me for the pleasure of a night? It wasn't so much the little one.

I understand that, Scothine said; I understand that; get on with your confession.

It was the big one that perplexed me and drove me as wild as a puckaun for the first half-hour. But the backside, the red hair, the round eyes shining like stars can be overcome by prayer, said Scothine. It's true, indeed, Scothine, but she was at me all the while, saying: for the temptation thou resistest to-night thou shalt receive a great reward in heaven. That's where you should have meditated on the cross, Scothine whispered. I did that, you may be sure, Scothine, and she, knowing my great torment, said: keep on saying your prayers, or turn to my little sister, for she won't be stirring you up as I seem to do. But the little sister was asleep—— She was asleep, was she? Scothine cried out. She was that, and every moment I thought that I was a lost man. Such restlessness, Dare said, is not in the bond. If you're as bad as this in the first hour, what will you be later on when I wake my sister and we begin the greater temptations? Are there greater ones than these? I asked. There are, surely, she said, and you must prepare for them by the tub, the way Scothine does when he's hard hit. The tub! I cried. Yes, she said; up with you and I'll show it to you. And taking me to the window she told me to climb into the cistern, and I stood in the cistern up to my neck for the best part of half-an-hour. It wasn't till then I was let back into the room, and the pipes were given to me. You can play them? Dare said. I can that, I said.

And you stood the test of the dancing, did you? Scothine asked.

For a while; but I had to make a lep for the cistern to

prepare myself for the game of leap-frog, and the greater temptations.

And you withstood them all without incontinence, voluntary or involuntary? I did so. Well, then, let us pray together, and let us thank God that you were able to keep the devil out of the bed, for I was afeared for you, and on my knees I prayed all the night long that you might be swung up to heaven in a golden scarf and not let down into hell on a black pulley. Brenainn, it may be that my prayers saved you. Why should you be taking all the credit to yourself, Scothine, believing, in your vanity, that you're the only man in Ireland that can lie with two young women without sinning with them, if you be not on your knees in the next room praying that strength may be given unto him? A sore place this would be for God to rest his eyes on if I were the only one, Scothine answered, and Brenainn turned his eyes on Scothine, trying to understand him. Then why were you praying for me? Hadn't you been with the girls yourself and didn't you know all their tricks? I've only dared the temptations after a diet of water-grass and acorns, but you overcame the temptation of the thighs and the temptation of the breasts, and the feast of the eyes that the dancing affords, and the game of leap-frog, with a full belly, for I'm not forgetful, though I was at the moment, of the great big trout that we ate for our dinner. It was the thought of the trout kept you awake all night praying for me? Brenainn asked. It was that and nothing else, for why should you not succeed where I have succeeded? Scothine continued. And your thought all the time, my poor friend, was that I might lose my soul through you. That is so. I was asking myself all last night what would happen to me at all if my share of the thing had lost your soul, Brenainn. But let us say no more about it. You threw out the temptation after eating the trout, and it weighing two and a half pounds if it weighed an ounce.

I couldn't get that trout off my mind, and my conscience was sorely stricken that I should have led you into temptation after eating the trout, and all the night on my knees my entrails were wambling, and my head so light that I hardly knew what kind of prayers I was saying, the way they were coming and going like sparks from a smith's anvil. But I'm talking too much. Tell me at once that there was no incontinence. There was none, Brenainn replied. Then you're a great man and a holy man indeed, a great glory to Ireland herself; you're all that, and I'll shrive you this instant of the venial sins you've committed, for there are always venial sins, and it were better that the earth and sun, moon and stars should fall out of their places, and the skies be for ever empty, than that the least sin should be committed, so great is the least of these in God's sight. And Scothine began the Latin prayer, mumbling through it quickly, his voice getting clear at the words "absolvo te." And these being pronounced, Brenainn rose from his knees. And now, Scothine, one last question: tell me, when we're in heaven together, will these two girls be given to me or will they be given to you? If they're given to anyone, Scothine answered, his face clouding a little, they should be given to me. But you didn't resist them with a trout weighing two and a half pounds in your belly! Didn't you eat half the trout yourself, so there was only a pound and a quarter after all. Don't let us be arguing about what's going to happen to us in heaven, but do you be looking out and searching in your own parish for two other girls that may tempt you as mine have tempted you, and get you up into the front row. I'll do that if the Bishop lets me, but, Scothine, in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. We've read that in the scriptures. You're a great story-teller, Alec, and I fell to thinking that the priests departed from each other in happiness, and with a little regret at the back of the happiness which

neither could understand, so entirely without cause did it seem to both of them.

CHAP. XXVII.

WE had left Westport in plenty of sunshine, but as soon as we came to the great bog, lying between Westport and Loch Conn, squalls, charged with stinging rain, rushed down upon us from the hills, dun-coloured hills frowning under their cloud caps; and the road we were following seemed so unlikely to lead us towards woods filled with rhododendrons (now in their decline, my host said, as we started, the flush of June being over; a sort of evening hour of beauty gone, I cried back to him) that when I found myself crouching behind a turf stack for shelter, the suspicion rose up quite naturally that we were being befooled. Alec, I said, do you think Mr. Ruttledge is putting a joke upon us? Mr. Ruttledge isn't the man would make it a joke to send you off to Loch Conn for a wetting, Alec answered. I've never been in this part of the country myself, but I've heard of the rhododendrons, and we shall be among them soon if your honour will have patience; you see the weather is mending, the clouds are lifting from the tops of the hills yonder. But the bog, I said. It seems as if it were going on for ever. That is the way with a bog, your honour; it ends and begins without any warning. I've remarked the same thing myself, I answered, and we trudged for two miles more, weary travellers at last rewarded by the sight of green hill-sides. Now wouldn't this be the domain Mr. Ruttledge was talking about? Alec asked, and my surprise was great, for the woods seemed to me to become more beautiful as we proceeded into them, rising steeply from the shores of the lake, and full, as my host had told me, with declining bloom, white, pink, purple and mauve, with one great tree flaunting so insolently over the ruin of the

gate lodge, or steward's house or cabin (it matters not which, once a human habitation) that it was pleasant to pass into the demure woods; the world we live in being a green one, our eyes return to green eagerly after too much colour.

We had been told that we should find the Royal Osmunda by the lake-side, and the owner conducted us from terrace to terrace till we came to a plank bridge, a crazy structure that had been built out into the marsh; there were gaps in it, but with the aid of stepping-stones we reached the corner in which the great fern grew, but alas, it grew in such profusion that we took little pleasure in it and returned inland disappointed, depressed perhaps tells my feelings better. I shall expect you back at tea-time, the owner said, after giving us leave to roam his woods whither it might please our fancy, calling us back to advise an excursion to a ruin. We should find it, he said, if we followed the lake shore for about half-a-mile. But I do not know that it's worth visiting, he added on consideration; very little of the original convent remains. But the evening looks like clearing, and if you meet an old peasant ask him to tell you the story of a nun who is buried there. I've only heard it hinted at. A saint it appears she was. You may be more successful than I have been; you see I'm a stranger, an Englishman living on good terms with the people but looked upon as an alien. We'll try, I said, turning my eyes towards Alec. A moment before it seemed to me that I had descried an awakening of interest in his face. He knows the saint's story, I said to myself, and hoping to hear it from him, I thanked the owner and entered his woods again; a beautiful and silent domain, I said, not a bird singing in it, for the rain is threatening still; a strange day, not a wave on the beach nor patter of hare or rabbit among the leaves. Sorra one, said Alec. And we walked idly to the little pier, almost forgetful of the ruin we had been

invited to go in search of. A boatless pier, I said. What has become of the owner's boats? Alec was unable to answer me and we stood gazing across the lake. Not a gull, nor a sand-piper, nothing but the gaunt shores yonder. A lake famous for its trout, I added, hoping to tempt Alec into an observation. It was once the finest water in Ireland for trout, he answered, but it is no good since they got rid of the pike. But the pike ate the trout, I said. All the same, Alec replied, where there are no pike there are no trout; they've ruined the lake. He nudged me and pointed to a great heap of stones by the little pier. Stoats, he whispered, and in response to an imitation given with his lips of a rabbit wounded or in distress, four little red heads peeped out. The gamekeeper will be able to get them all by the end of the week; catch the bitch first and then the young ones will come looking after her and trot into the trap.

It seemed to me sad that the pretty litter of red animals should all be struggling in traps before the end of the week, and to rid myself of the doleful spectacle I began to ask questions about the ruin; a famous convent it was, no doubt, in the years back. You've heard of it, Alec? I've heard of it surely, he muttered, and we walked on in silence through wet stones and tussocks and juniper bushes. A poor country, I said, grey lake and gaunt shores, naked everywhere save whence we have come. But Ireland was once called the island of woods. I've always heard it was here, he said, interrupting my meditation; and I found myself beside an ivied ruin. "Ruin" seems an exaggerated expression, for there was little more than a heap of stones covered with a thick mane of ivy, but a closer examination of the ground disclosed traces of ancient walls that the earth had not yet overgrown. Yes, it was in this place, he repeated, that one of Ireland's greatest sons was done out.

The story is coming, I said, but dared not ask Alec

to continue it lest he might take fright. He came here from the wilderness when he was getting a bit too old to live on water-grass and cockles. You remember Scothine, your honour? He that put the great trial upon Brenainn, making him lie between two virgins with round breasts and after dining him on a fine trout. Well, Moling was another such a saint as himself before he came to the convent and there's no saying that he wouldn't be as high in heaven to-day if it hadn't been—ah, well, 'tis true what they do be saying, that no man is safe from temptation till he's dead.

There's a story on his mind without doubt, I said to myself, and I could listen to it with more comfort in these woods than on a gusty bog trying to keep my hat from blowing away. Don't you think, Alec, that we're going too far? I asked, and tea waiting for us in the house beyond. Faith, a cup of tea would be better than a blow of a stick, he answered cheerfully; but I thought your honour might like to see one more twist of the lake. I've heard of the view from beyond that hill—— There are few things, I interrupted, more beautiful than a fine evening after the rain. Whatever your honour likes. Perhaps the tea would be better, I answered, and as soon as we came to the ruined wall on our way back I began to examine it, without, however, putting any questions to him. I'm slow to go beyond this spot, said Alec, without getting down on my two knees, wet and all as the ground is.

An ill-judged word might stop the story on his lips, and to say nothing at all might allow it to pass away. All but that corner wall has disappeared, I mentioned casually. True for you, Alec murmured, the ground has grown over most of the convent, all but her grave and the clay will never climb over that, for wherever there's been a great wickedness done there's a scar left. The story is coming, he will tell it, and how suitable these

woods are for the telling of a story, these quiet, almost soundless woods, only the raindrops falling from the leaves, I said, and began to admire the architecture of the trees—tall boles of elm and beech with the hills showing through the top branches, and, I said to myself, the misted lake through the lower. A beautiful wood whose monotony is relieved by a rough pine—that one making a break in the pale greenery.

But the story Alec was cherishing of the saint who came out of the wilderness in search of temptations, like Scothine, but who, unlike Scothine, failed to conquer them, diverted my attention from the trees to Alec's anxious face, and putting together all my knowledge of Alec, gathered, it is true, in a week's intimacy, and adding to it my instinctive comprehension of what is lowly and remote, I concluded, rightly or wrongly, I know not which, but I concluded that outside of his gift of story-telling he differed in no essential fact from any casual peasant picked out at Westport on market day; and that if I pressed the analysis a little further, we should come to this: that very little of his gift of story-telling is personal to him—to himself. But can anyone say: this much belongs to me and to no one else? Is not all reflection and derivation? My refusal, however, was firm not to be led into this blind alley, and fixing my thoughts firmly on Alec, striving to see him steadily and to see him whole, as a good mid-Victorian should, I said: his gift of story-telling amuses me because it is new to me, but it is as old as the hills themselves, flowing down the generations since yonder hills were piled up. Sheep paths worn among the hills. His grandfather or grand-uncle, whichever the Dublin scholar was, trimmed these paths a little. Sheep paths, nothing else. Alec is a creature of circumstance, and like myself can be accounted for. He tells stories against the priests and nuns of the twelfth century, for these are not far removed, in his

knowledge and imagination, from druids and druidesses. It was only a few centuries before the twelfth that the druids began to discard the oak leaves for the biretta; but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they were full-bellied Roman priests; by that time the word had become flesh; it is just touch and go if he tells me the story he is brooding over or refrains from telling it. I can do nothing.

On this thought I raised my eyes for another look at him, and as I did so Alec said: mind he must have been one of the greatest saints that ever fell out of Ireland, for it was the great deed he did, saving a soul from the devil himself. I told your honour, as I should have done, that it was at the end of his life; he came out of the wilderness where he had been along with the hermits, since he was a bit of a gossoon living on cress and gulls' eggs. It was after twenty years of the tough eating that he came to rest his bones in the convent that you saw this day. A man between fifty and sixty, yet the diet did not seem to have taken a feather out of him, for his hair was as black as you like, and it hung down on his shoulders in fine curls, and the pair of eyes in his head were as shiny as a young cat's. A spare, wiry little man that no one would believe to be so old. But it was just as I'm telling you. He came out of the wilderness between fifty-five and sixty to hear the confessions of nuns by the lake beyond; he came down from the crags above Old Head. You know Old Head, your honour. Mr. Ruttledge goes there every summer with the children to swim. It was there Moling had been living many a year the way I told you. A queer place it is too, and he thought that his rest was well-earned anyhow. But there was no rest for him in this world, poor man, from the day he waved his hat at the crags above Old Head, and came down at the trot to Loch Conn to confess the nuns of Cuthmore. And then didn't the bad luck start up in the most unlikely place, in the

mind of Sister Ligach, as pious a one as ever wore out a pair of knees on the top of this earth. I've come, Father, she said, dropping down on the same bones, I've come with a great sin stuck in my conscience; but I've faith in the sacrament to relieve me. Well you might, said Moling, for you are the one got well instructed. On these words, he settled his stole and cocked his ear, and wasn't it a relief to him to learn that the only thing that was wrong with her was this, that she wasn't able to pray to the saints to put in a word for herself and the sisters in the convent. A light sin, surely, but being a priest he had to blame her, and tell her she'd be better off remembering the saints that stand by us when the word of death is in our throats, singing and praying round the throne of God to spare them that do be passing away from the world, or if that cannot be owing to mortal sin, getting their share of purgatory a bit easy.

After saying all this he thought he had done with her and that she would get up from her knees, but there wasn't a move out of her. My child, he said, what are you waiting for? Well, Father, said herself, what good would it be for me to be leaving you and I not making a clean breast of it? I confessed that I can't pray to the saints any longer, but I've worse than that in my head. Well, the priest puckered up his lips and a thoughtful look came into his eyes. No more than to the saints am I able to pray to the holy virgin to succour us. Are you telling me that you can't pray to the holy virgin, the mother of the blessed God! said the priest, and he in a fright. Not to herself who bore the son of God in her womb? It is like that, Father, indeed. The priest next to jumped out of his skin at that, and the chair he'd been sitting on fell behind him. Pick up your chair, Father, and hear me out, said Ligach, or you'll be sorry afterwards. I can pray to no one but to Jesus himself, said she. To no better could you nor anyone else be praying, said the

priest; but don't forget that there is no one could put in a word better or quicker for you and for us all than his own mother. Tell me, my child, who would he be likely to be listening to more than to his own mother? To which Ligach replied: the truth indeed, Father, but I've no thought for anybody but himself, and there's no use giving a prayer when your thoughts aren't in it. I wouldn't say so far as that, said the priest, for by saying the prayers themselves the sinner brings himself under the rule of the Church, and the frozen waters of his heart will loosen and burst. It is as you say, Father, but you haven't heard all yet. I can't say a prayer at Mass; my thoughts aren't on the Mass that you're saying, but out in the garden.

At the words "out in the garden" Moling's brow blackened, and maybe it was the quiet drawl of the girl got him on the raw as much as anything else. Is it that your thoughts are out gallivanting in the garden when I'm calling down God into the bread and wine? But, Father, isn't it much of a much? Isn't it the same thing? Jesus gave us the sacrament, and if I'm thinking of him I'm thinking of what is going on at the altar too. It is of the upper chamber in which he ordered the sacrament, cried the priest, that you should be thinking; and it would be better still if your thoughts were on the miracle and me at it. My child, I'm afraid I don't understand you. I haven't got the rights of it yet. Well, it's like this, Father; all the time you're saying your Mass I'm thinking of Jesus on the cross, and he suffering great torments for me. A very good thought that is, Moling answered; a holy thought indeed; but you ought to be thinking too that it was himself ordered the apostles to celebrate Mass when he was gone. I believe all that, said Ligach, but it's the way that his suffering on the cross puts every other thing out of my head, for am I not his bride whom he will take in his arms? That's true for you, said the priest, but you mustn't be thinking too much of your

meeting with him in heaven. It is well enough for you, Father, to say that, but 'tis of our meeting in heaven I'm thinking all the time, and there's nothing will ever get that thought out of my mind.

All the same I won't be refusing you absolution, said he. But, Father, will you be hearing me out first, for I've not told you the lot of it yet? A great part of my prayers to Jesus is that he will be giving me a sign, a nod of the head or the like. Faith, said the priest, I do not come to this place to listen to nonsense and rameis. Say your prayers and obey the rule, and let me be hearing the rest of the parish. How many more are there waiting to come in to me? Three of us, Father. And now, Ligach, if you want my absolution, bend your head; for you see, your honour, Moling was a hot-tempered man, and Ligach one of those that would work up a passion in the greatest saint in heaven. All the same, said she, I'd be glad of a sign. But what would the like of you be wanting a sign for? Haven't you heard that humility is the top of the virtues? Be off with you. But Ligach wasn't to be outdone. I'm afraid, Father, without a sign—— Without a sign of what? snapped out Moling. The day may come, Ligach continued, when I shall not feel as sure as I do now that he suffered all those torments for me. I want to believe always and to be sure of it, never thinking of anything but my belief in the sign of God our redeemer. You're wanting a lot and plenty, said the priest—to live on earth as we shall live hereafter in heaven. But it's not a bit too much, surely, when we remember the death he died, which I never can let out of my thoughts. You're a good little nun, said the priest; I used to be like that myself in the years back. You'll give me absolution, Father? Faith, I will, said the priest, startled, for he'd been away.

Other penitents were waiting; he shrove them all without giving much of his mind to their sins, for he was thinking of Ligach all the time and on leaving the chapel

who did he meet but Ligach and the Mother Abbess coming in from the garden, Ligach dripping like a spaniel that had been in the river. Father, cried Mother Abbess, I'll ask you to refuse her absolution if she doesn't give in and be biddable. Look at the way she is in, and you wouldn't guess where I found her in three guesses—in front of the cross kneeling down in a pool of water. See the way she's in—out there in the teeming rain, catching her death of cold. Go and change your clothes at once, and remember that the first duty of a nun is to give in to her superiors. To back up the Mother Abbess, Moling said he never remembered so severe a winter, and when Ligach came to confess to him he wasn't a bit surprised to hear a bad cough. The cough was followed up by another, and before she could confess one of her sins, she was taken with such a fit of coughing and sneezing that Moling said: my child, that's the bad cold you've got, and a cough on the top of it. Yes, I suppose I got it in the garden, for it's been wet enough there lately. But didn't I hear the Mother Abbess tell you that you weren't to go there? You did, Father. But it was for a sign I was praying, and if I do not get one I may fall into a worse sin than that of disobedience. Now what sign are you wanting? asked Moling. A sign that he is waiting for me in heaven. You've got a bad cold, a very bad one, the priest repeated. Faith, I have, but a cold is a small matter compared to what he suffered on the cross. 'Tis true for you, said Moling, but a cold may put an end to you just as well as a thrust of a spear. You wouldn't be comparing myself to himself, would you? said the nun. Of course not, the priest snapped out, and began to speak hard and stiff about her folly in wanting God to grant her special favours. You're sinning in the sight of God, said he, by endangering your life in the way you're doing. Be off with you now; and Ligach just bowed her head, and her cough was so bad as she left the chapel that the priest

would have taken his words back if he could, and not being able to do that, he rang the parlour bell as soon as he had had dinner and asked for herself.

Now, said he to herself, Ligach has as bad a cough as I've ever heard in my born days, and the Mother Abbess answered: true for you, Father; it keeps us all awake at night. We can hear her all over the convent barking, and now there are three other sisters and the lot almost as bad as Ligach, and there will be more laid up, for be it wet or cold, they're all kneeling round the cross catching their full of cramps. Well, I was like that myself once; and Moling began to tell of the years he spent among the gulls on the crags above Old Head, and the twenty-three years in the woods living on water-grass. For thirty years I didn't sleep under a roof, but as the years go by we begin to weary of the things that we hung on to in our youth. But our lives are in God's hand; we belong to God, who has given life into our keeping, and expects us to look after it. I'm altogether of the same idea as yourself, the Mother Abbess replied, but it will be no change while that same cross is left in the garden. A better place for it, said the priest, would be in the chapel. Now you've said it, Father, and as soon as we can get a little help we will have the cross—— Put up in one of the side chapels, the priest interjected. I'll show you the place.

And it was a fortnight after the shifting of the cross that Sister Ligach crawled out of her cell more dead than alive; the others were well before her. And what did she do? Out with her into the garden to kneel down in front of the cross that had nearly cost her her life, and finding it gone out of the garden, she cried: how are we to keep our thoughts from wandering from him who died for our sins and waits for us in heaven? Do we know that he got the best of health always when he lived on this earth? Not a word in the scripture; not a word. And

such was her canter till Mother Abbess had to say: now, Ligach, obedience is the first rule in a convent. But, Mother, think what he suffered for me and I not allowed into the garden for his sake. Well, that is my rule, said herself, but to make matters lighter for Ligach, she gave the young nun permission to rise out of her bed at eleven o'clock and go into the chapel and do an hour's devotion before the nuns rose out of their beds for matins. At which indulgence the tears came into Ligach's eyes, and she said: may the Lord have mercy upon you for that. It is all I can give you, the Abbess answered; make the best of it, Ligach. Faith and troth I will, and you won't be left out of the prayers, Mother Abbess. And every night Ligach was on her knees before the cross praying for a sign. But not the sign of a sign nor the ghost of a sign came near her, and when she next went to confession, she said: no sign has come to me, Father, and the temptation is always pushing me from behind. What temptation is that one, my child? the priest asked. The devil himself and not one of his bailiffs either, telling me always that if I can't get a sign from Jesus, I must be getting one from himself, which would do me as well. My child, my child, do you know what you're saying? I do indeed, she answered, and I cannot help myself much longer. Every time the thought comes into my head I shake it and say: Hail Mary, but it doesn't help me at all. If I were you I'd give myself a pinch in some soft spot, said the priest, or a pin I'd stick into me when the temptation came around; here's one for Satan, you will be saying, as the pin goes into your thigh or your bosom; and if you aren't hurt enough push the pin into the sorest place you can find, under one of your nails, and if that doesn't stop the black fellow I'll have to put on my considering cap and think it out, but do what I tell you first.

It must be the devil, he said, as he walked home thinking what he could do to save her soul; and if, said

he, his thoughts taking a sudden turn, I were a bit of a carpenter I might make something with a pulley that would let the head nod at her when she's on her knees asking for a sign; a nod of the head is all that's wanted to save her soul. But bad luck to it, for I am an unhandy man, said the saint—for he was a saint, or a sort of a saint, your honour, though a sinner into the bargain. I'm no good at carpentering; there isn't one in the town of Westport that could learn me in a year what the little boy playing among the shavings knows already. So I needn't be getting a pain in my head thinking about pulleys and the like. I'll get another thought soon, and a better one. Nor was he long waiting for a second thought; in five minutes, neither more nor less, he had it, and it frightening the life out of him—the queerest thought that ever came into a man's head, one that left him without a prayer to throw at the devil. Let me at all events be pulling myself into a shape of prayer, he said, and if the thought isn't driven off while I'm down on my knees, I'll know for certain it was sent to me by the Lord Jesus—for what he was thinking was that he had just the figure for the deed.

It is as like as not, he thought, his hair was as black as mine, he being from the country of the Jews, but they always paint him with fair hair. But maybe she'll be too deep in her prayers to take much notice of the colour of my hair, if any colour be showing. As soon as she lifts her eyes to me I'll give a nod of the head to her from above and she'll get enough faith out of that nod to last her till she's called up before the throne of God. But if she comes kissing my feet and begging me to come down to her it will be the great temptation I shall be overcoming, getting thereby a higher place in paradise than them gone before me; for a chance like this one it was well worth my while to have come out of the wilderness.

The priest's thoughts broke off suddenly, and after one

or two more turns up and down his garden he went back to the house with the fear on him that Jesus might not be wishing his cross interfered with. How do I know that it isn't Satan is tempting me? he asked, and going to the holy-water stoop he splashed nearly all the water in it about him. But aren't I the fool? said he; for why should the devil be prompting me to save a soul and he wanting as many as he can get hold of? It is God himself is putting this thought into my head, relying on me to outdo the devil, who has a mighty big wish on him at present to get Sister Ligach's soul, one of the beautifulest that ever looked out of a human face. A great prize she'd be to him, surely. The face of a saint if there be one walking about on two legs in holy Ireland. But if I lose my soul in the saving of hers! cried Moling. But it is the old boy himself that is putting that fear into my head, for whoever lost his soul while at the work of robbing the devil of a soul he set his heart on? I'll lead her out of the chapel quietly, and bid her tell no one. Risks there are, he said, a few minutes after, in every hour of life, but a holier one than mine, which is to rob the devil, I don't know of. Now can anybody tell me it won't be Jesus himself that will be thanking me for the robbing on the day of judgment. . . . But I'm bet after all—how will I fix myself up on the cross? The image is nailed there —nails in the hands and the feet; but my feet aren't made of wood, and must have a support; and for my hands I must have two rings of rope, and Moling, not being much of a handy man, as I've said before, spent many hours more than another would have done making them rings.

At last they were twisted and hidden away in the chapel, where he was himself at half-past ten, removing our Lord from his cross and fixing himself up in his place, which he had just time to do before Ligach came in to her devotions; and he might have dropped down from the cross

so great was his fear that she might see the loin-cloth was missing from his body, for he'd forgotten it in his hurry, and, says he to himself, if Ligach wasn't innocent of the difference in the make of a man and a woman, I'd be fairly caught. But he was safe enough, Ligach having no thought but for him that is in heaven. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise. Thou'lt not deny me a sign, said she, lifting her eyes to the cross; it will increase my faith in thee till thou shalt be in him that sees me, in him that I see, in him that speaks to me, in him that I am speaking to, in him that I hear and in him that hears me. And seeing and hearing naught by thee, so would I live and die aloof from all else, from the world. Dear God, I would be unto thee on earth as I shall be in heaven. A sign, a sign of thy love of me. A sign that will save me from the temptation of thinking that the devil would answer me if I were to pray to him.

On hearing them terrible words the priest took such a fright that he slipped his hands out of the ropes and came down to her, sure and certain that he'd be able to quiet her. But while he was telling her of the great meeting it would be for them both up in heaven, she kept saying: am I not up in heaven now? the sparks flying out of her eyes all the time as you might see them in Jimmy Kilcoin's forge when he pulls at the bellows. Am not I Christ's bride? she kept calling to the poor man, trying his best to get to the holy water; and if he'd got there 'tis a different story I'd be telling, but the senses failed on him, and he no more than a yard off the stoop, and when they came back the nun was beside him in a faint so deadly that he mistook it for her death. It's a poor thing to be tempted like this, surely, says he; but no more than a venial sin can it be, for 'tis the intention that

counts. But I must be attending to her, and it took a lot of sprinkling and calling into her ears that she must obey him before her lips opened and she muttered: thy will be done, Lord. Open your eyes, Ligach, said he; and she opened them, but only to see what she was minded to see, and, led to the door of the chapel, she heard him say: what has fallen out this night must be kept to yourself. One word of it to anybody and the sign that you got to-night will lose its power, and the blessing will be changed into a curse altogether. Return to your cell, Ligach, and close the door behind you.

And no sooner was she out of the chapel than the priest put the image back and made off with himself in the great fright of his life, as well it might be, for by dint of what had passed he didn't seem to know himself rightly at all; his thoughts were all astray, and he couldn't get them together in his poor head. At one moment he was thinking that he had planned the lot from the beginning, and the next that if he hadn't got down off the cross and made her his bride she would have come to her right reason and found out what a trick he was working on her. Her faith would have gone for good and all, he cried out, and instead of saving a soul I'd have well damned one for ever. As soon as she came to kiss my feet, I was bound to come down. But the rest? All right from her side, but maybe my soul is lost. But it is the intention that counts; and all night he was asking Jesus if a sin committed with a good intention could be a sin. The sins of the flesh, he began again, are small ones compared with the sins of the spirit; her sin was of the spirit, mine was of the flesh. The flesh has redeemed the spirit, a thing which doesn't often happen, for it is usually the spirit that redeems the flesh. But in this world things often fall out contrary-like.

She won't tell anybody, not even myself, he murmured; she will keep her sin dark; but there was no sin on her

side, only on mine, and on mine but a venial sin, if my intention was to save a soul, which it was, and a man should be judged by his intentions, it is said.

CHAP. XXVIII.

BEFORE long it seemed to the nuns that Moling hurried them up in their confessions; they missed the bits of kindly reproof, and left him wondering, saying: his mind is off; our sins don't seem to matter to him. It's your turn now, Ligach; and seeing a light on her face that made them think of the sun shining on the sea, they said: what's wrong with Ligach this time?

Father, she said, dropping on her knees, a sign has been given to me, and a greater one than I hoped for, and, the nun went on: he came down from his cross and took me in his arms. But no sooner were the words across her lips than a great fear and a great fright came over her. Oh, but I've been told not to speak of all this; he put a bond on me, and I've broken the bond. It would have been broken, the priest answered, if you'd spoken to anybody but myself. Every secret is safe with me. Don't you know the seal of the confession has never yet been broken and never will be? But, Father, a bond was put upon me never to reveal what passed between us by himself at the door of the chapel. Am I not the representative of Christ on earth? Moling asked, and when you tell me what happened between you, you're telling it to himself. Haven't I the power to bid him come down from heaven into the bread and wine? Must he not obey me? I know that, said Ligach, I know it well. And don't I absolve sins that are committed? 'Tis true for you, said the nun. But it is hard to tell.

He came down from his cross, and he took me in his arms, and made me his bride in life as he will afterwards in heaven. 'Tis a great honour he did to you, surely. It

is that, she replied, and one that I wouldn't have dared to think of if it hadn't happened to me, but it is just as I told it to your Reverence, just as I told it, and no way else. But not a word out of you about this, cried the priest. I won't say a word, Father, Ligach replied, for I was told not to. And now, said Moling, I'll be giving you absolution. But would you be giving me absolution for being visited by himself? I forgot that, said the priest, but mind what I'm telling you: let not a word out of your mouth to anyone of this, or he'll never visit you again. Visit me again? said Ligach; what would he come to me again for? though indeed I'd be glad if he did. The priest did not answer, and she repeated: for what, I'm asking you, Father, would he visit me again? And the priest still not saying a word she kept on at him. For what, I'm asking you? for why should he be treating me different from Mary, who was visited only once so far as the scriptures go. True, true, said Moling, he will never come to you again. But something will come to me, for it wasn't for nothing he came down from his cross. Time will prove me right. I was forgetting, said the priest. A strange thing to be forgetting, a thing that doesn't happen once in every thousand years, she replied.

CHAP. XXIX.

WHAT did she say, Moling asked himself, when Ligach rose up from her knees and left the chapel; what did she say about expecting? Will there be a child? he asked. And on his way home he asked himself if he came down from the cross because he was afraid that if Ligach did not get the sign she had been praying for so long her belief might fade. Did she not tell him that the temptation was pressing her from behind that if she addressed herself to the devil she'd get an answer? O Lord, have mercy upon me, he muttered, and he knew that all the

colour was out of his face, and that his hand was trembling. I'm bet and bothered with it all, said he. If I've sinned, forgive me, Lord. But who is to tell me if I be in mortal sin or venial sin? Not a bishop in Ireland could tell me that, nor the Pope of Rome himself, for what happened last night never happened to anybody in the world before. He walked on a bit and then stopped again. I'm the most miserable man in all the world, and will not be able to pull through this business. He went on walking ahead, mile after mile, without a prayer in his heart and his thoughts tormenting him, buzzing in his poor mind like flies stinging him, stopping him in his walk, making him drop his knife and fork out of his hand when he was at his dinner, leaving him staring across the room, thinking of the good days he spent with the hermits living on water-grass, and the better ones when he was on his own picking sea gulls' eggs out of the rocks.

Them were fine days, he said, and I had the good health then, but it is all going now, though I'll not be what you would call an old, ancient man for a good while yet. It is the fear that I am in mortal sin is destroying me and wasting my bones. And then he would stop to ask himself what she meant when she said that something would happen to her. Was it a child? Of course it was that same, and he hadn't much longer to wait for the news from herself in the convent. Father, I think I'm with child. Women that live in chastity are often troubled with fancies, and to speak of such a thing and it not the truth might—— How could it be else, said Ligach, he after coming down from his cross to me? All the same keep it to yourself till the child leaps in your womb, if 'tis there he is, he said to her, and to himself: the news will soon be out; the nuns will soon know all about it. Highly favoured, they will say, is our convent. And, Ligach, now will you be telling the others that I can hear no more confessions to-day. Oh, my Lord Jesus Christ, cried

Moling, as soon as the nun closed the door behind her, the torture is in the waiting! And from that day out he'd be saying: another day has gone by and I'm one day nearer to the day when the Mother Abbess will come with her nuns, Ligach in the middle of them, to tell me about the great miracle: Ligach in the family way though she has never known a man.

The weeks went by and he counting them till the week came when he said to himself: she must be seven months gone, yet the nuns haven't come to me, though her appearance is great. As these very words were passing through his mind the parlour door opened and in came the Mother Abbess, surrounded by her nuns, with Ligach in the middle of them. Father, said the Mother Abbess, we have come to tell you something you will find it hard to believe, yet it is true. It's a miracle, surely, said Moling, after he had heard the Mother Abbess, and at these words the nuns were so overjoyed that they linked their hands and danced around Ligach for all the world like a lot of children. It is not for me, said Moling, as soon as a little quiet had been gotten, to discourage your faith in the miracles that God grants to us sometimes so that we should not altogether forget him, but I call upon you to be mindful that you all keep this a secret among yourselves, for if the miracle you speak of should not prove to be as great a miracle as you think it is, we shall be—— But, Father, they began, it is either a great miracle or it's no miracle at all, and you're the last man that should say a word against Ligach. I am indeed, said Moling, the very last in the world; her sweet face tells that she knew no kind of man any more than the virgin herself did till the birth of our Lord. But in this world it's not so easy to find believers; there are always gabby tongues, and this neighbourhood is not freer from them than another. But who, Mother Abbess asked the priest, would say a word against our little Ligach, whose conception

is as miraculous as Mary's? and the priest, without a word in his chops, stood looking at the nun.

Her conception is certainly a great mystery, he said at last, and until we learn more about it my advice to you all is to keep this secret from everybody. But, said Mother Abbess, what do you mean, Father Moling, when you say till we know more about it? Well, this is what I mean, said he, that the boy himself will be proof enough of his miraculous birth when he grows up. Let us hope so. But we dont know, said Mother Abbess, whether it will be a girl or a boy. A boy, a boy, cried the nuns, clapping their hands, and they began to argue that it could not be else than a boy, for that no woman had ever borne a girl miraculously. Oh, said the priest, I'm afraid we're travelling on a road that will carry us into a fine heresy; but after thinking a while he saw he was mistaken, for St. Anne herself wasn't conceived miraculously, only without sin. There will be a child for sure, but, as I've told you already, until we learn more about it, I'd be advising you to speak to none about the miracle that God has been pleased to work for us. The Mother Abbess was of the priest's way of thinking, and having gotten a promise from them all in the name of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the priest said to himself: well, God knows how all this will turn out, and we must leave it to him.

At times he was tempted to hope that she might die, for only her death and the death of his child could stop the scandal; but he was a saint as well as a sinner, and every time the thought came he shook his head, for he knew it was the devil that sent it, and he kept the holy water going about him all the time. His real torment was that, thinking over the reason for his sin, he didn't know if he was guilty of a mortal sin or venial sin, or of no sin at all. Be this as it may, he often said: I'm doing a good share of my purgatory on the earth, and these

were the words he was speaking to himself the day the Mother Abbess came in to him with the joyful tidings that Ligach had been delivered of a fine boy, and with no more than two hours' trouble before he came: no more than a little uneasiness.

Didn't we tell you, cried the nuns, that Ligach would bear a boy and not a girl? and the priest, not knowing what to say to all this, asked if the child was a weakling; and, a bit surprised that he should ask that, the Mother Abbess answered: there's nothing weak about him barring that he has a strong weakness for the breast, even if it was a virgin bore him into the world. Is a virgin's child different? he asked, not knowing very much what he was saying, and the two of them fell to talking of the christening, which was to be at the end of the week, the priest thinking his mind would be easier when it was over. But from this hour out he never got any easy minute, and he put in a week before the christening thinking of his sermon, which would all be about miracles and mysteries. Said he: I mustn't say a word against one or t'other, for the sisters are right in this that to say her case was not miraculous is much the same as taking away her character and she a nun enclosed in the Convent of Cuthmore. And he began to think of the men they'd suspect if the miracle were denied, but he could think only of the gardener and the gardener's boy. No one, he muttered, would believe that Ligach—— The nuns won't be cheated out of their miracle, and the best I can do is to persuade them to let the child be put out to nurse. We can say it was found by the convent door; left there by someone that didn't want it. A moment after, he remembered a woman down the road who had lost her child: she would be glad to rear it for us, if Ligach—— But will she consent to be separated from her child? And the nuns give in to part with it? Not a chance of it, poor childless women, and they are looking

forward to this child, and not one of them but is already a mother in her heart; the most I'll be able to do will be to get them to promise to keep the secret of Ligach's miraculous conception to themselves till the boy begins to show what sort of a man he'll be stretching into; and mind you he kept on telling them, for though the way she got him is a miracle we don't know for sure and certain who he was got by. But, Father, would you have us think that Satan had a finger in it? cried the Mother Abbess, and the nuns dropped their hands and eyes. I'm the last man in the world who'd be putting a sore thought into your minds, said Moling. I'm all for taking things easy, saying nothing about the miracle and letting him grow up naturally without any cramming up of Latin and Greek. But, Father, he must get the education.

The priest heaved a big sigh, for he knew well there was to be no rest for him on this earth, and hardly was the boy four years of age before he could read his native Irish tongue, and when he was seven or eight he could con the Latin and Greek; and between ten and eleven he was running down to his father's house taking out the books into the garden, reading and learning and refusing to be a shepherd or a carpenter or a blacksmith. Not one of the decent trades that Moling offered him could he be got to take up. It was only books that he had a thought for, and it was great delight to the nuns when he began to read the scriptures to them, and he only fourteen years of age. After this proof of his learning there was no holding the good sisters, and nothing the priest could say could stop their blabbing tongues. One and all of them went about telling how the boy had given out the scriptures to them in the Greek and the Latin, asking if that wasn't sign enough that a great prophet he would be in time to come: one who would hunt the heretics out of Ireland? Prophet! said the priest, who was now at his wits' end

to quiet them. And what would there be wonderful in that? said the Mother Abbess. Only this, said the priest, if Ligach conceived miraculously it would not be a prophet that she'd bring into the world but a Messiah; and no sooner were the words out of him than he saw he had made a mistake, for, as Mother Abbess put it to him and to the nuns, by means of the Holy Ghost God begot a son that was neither greater nor lesser than himself, and full equal to the Ghost. But we're not asked, said she, to give in that the son, with or without the help of the Ghost, can beget himself a son? Sure, being God, the priest answered, he could do anything. That is so, said the nun, but this is the vexation: have we got to believe that our little Martin is God's grandson? If we believe him to be a grandson aren't we upsetting the Trinity, a thing that no person here would have hand or part in. Bothered and badgered we are, thinking out the same question, and I'd like to know if the doctrine, as I'm giving it to you, will hold good at the Court of Rome.

Well, now, said the priest, I'll think that over, for it's a tough point indeed, and one that won't be untied in a month of days with the parishioners dropping in to say nothing of yourselves banging away at my door on one business or another. A knotty point which a man must give the whole of his head to. And where, would you tell me, can a man give his mind to a deep matter like the Trinity, unless it's in the wilderness that I came out of years ago, and where I am going back to think the whole thing out? If I make any head on it I'll come back with the news. But the nuns were very fond of Father Moling, and at that they started in to weep and wail and cry aloud, a fair keening it was; all ochōn ee ō go deō, and woeful is the day, very distressful to the priest, who, to quiet them, reminded them of the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. We'll pray that God will not keep you waiting, cried the nuns. And

I'll make a prayer too, he said, that will be the dead image of the one you're making, and now my blessing be upon you all, and on our little Martin, whom I give into your charge, and if you don't see my face again—— We will, we will, they all cried, for be the word, and the Mother Abbess took a grip and a swing out of his cassock, but he hauled it off her with a rip in it maybe, and their eyes rested on him for the last time as he stood for a moment at the edge of the wood with his bundle on his shoulder, and he waving a farewell sign to them.

May God speed him, cried the Mother Abbess, on his way, and help him to untie the knot, for it's a knot of the knots, and I'm dead sure that he is too old to stand the hardships of the wilderness, with them joints and them bones. May God send him back safe to us, said another nun. I'm thinking now, said the Mother Abbess—— and the nuns cried out to know what she was thinking. What will we be doing ourselves without a priest and he gone? Without confessions, without Mass we will be lost entirely. True for you, said a nun, and the others added: we never thought of that, Mother. We'll have to write to the Bishop, and tell him of the loss of our pastor, who has gone into the wilderness to think out a hard bit of doctrine, one so knotty, said the Mother Abbess in her letter, that he may be away for long enough. So we should be glad of a temporary priest if it would be convenient to your lordship to send us one.

CHAP. XXX.

THE man that goes into the wilderness in his youth returns to it in his old age, and I doubt if they'll ever see him again, the Bishop remarked, as he passed the letter on to his clerk. A man of seventy-five hasn't got it in him to spend his nights on the hill-side in draughty huts. But no more than that did he think about it,

except, of course, to send them a priest, and when the priest came, Manchin was his name, the first talk was about the disappearance of Moling into the wilderness, and the great and holy man that he was. The last words his lordship spake to me, said he to the nuns, were: the wilderness is no place for a man of his age, and all the nuns cried out that they thought the same. But there was no holding Moling with them for the knot he had to untie—— What knot? said Manchin. And bit by bit the story came out, the priest's face getting more and more troubled and queer-looking, till at last the Mother Abbess cried out: I can see by your Reverence's eye that you'll have none of the miracle, and that you think our little Martin is somebody's leavings. I wouldn't be saying that, said the priest, and he had a long talk with Ligach, who gave him the story as well as she could for the water in her eyes, and she guessing that the priest didn't swallow much of her story; and afterwards he wrote to the Bishop saying that a great heresy might arise out of this story that was going the round, and a great many souls be lost in it. The Bishop was fairly put out by the news, and wrote to his brother bishops, and seven or eight of them came, and they went at it.

The news had travelled far and wide; pilgrims were coming all the time, the whole country was talking of the miracle, and nothing else. As the Bishops didn't want to disappoint the people there is no knowing what mightn't have happened if, just as the Bishops were leaving, their mitres on their heads and their crosiers in their hands, three long-bearded old men hadn't come down out of the wilderness and began talking. The story they had come to tell was that Father Moling was doing penance for the great sin he had fallen into in the years back with a nun of the name of Ligach, whom he had deceived and had a child by. Enough, enough, cried the bishops; it was God sent you, lest a great heresy should eat the

Church the way a wolf eats a lamb. And the nuns and the bishops and all the country went after the Archbishop into the church, which was fuller that day than it ever was before or since.

Well this is the way it was: the Archbishop began to tell them out of the pulpit that it must have been God sent the three hermits with the news of Moling's sin, and that they didn't come a bit too soon either, for they, the bishops, were about to give it up as a bad job without coming to any judgment, none of them liking to say a word for or a thing against the story of such an out-of-the-way miracle as a miraculous conception, though there wasn't a man jack of them but agreed that such a thing was less likely than one of the little miracles the Church is always willing to accept, such as the curing of palsy with a touch, the giving back of sight and hearing with a spit, the setting of one that has not been able to go about without crutches for years on his feet again; for not like any of these little miracles are the greater miracles, such as the lifting of a dead man alive out of his tomb, or a woman that has never known a man bearing a child; these great miracles were done once in the Eastern world for the saving of the world. So it isn't likely that God would let his greater miracles happen again: for if a woman bore a child all by herself, or if a corpse lifted himself out of the tomb alive, the great truth of the Church would not be the plain pikestaff that it is to everyone that cares to open one of his two eyes. You may be sure and certain, my brethren, you may give in to it once for all, that no woman will get a child that way again, and whosoever says she has done it is just trying to disturb people in their faith. It is with sorrow that I give it out, but Father Moling was guilty of the crime; but let it be remembered always that he was punished for his sin year in year out, day after day, minute by minute, expecting all the time, and sure and

certain of it, that something would happen to drag the secret out of him, till at last he could bear the torment no longer and took himself off to the wilderness to pray for forgiveness.

The people were reminded by the Bishop that God had forgiven Moling, and that they were bound to believe this, for Moling had confessed his sin and sent three holy men with tidings of his confession to them, the only thing he could do to make up for his sin. The three holy men will tell you of Moling's repentance as they heard it from the lips of Father Moling himself. They will stand up. Upstand the hermits, said he, but not a hermit of the hermits moved, and as nobody stirred the people began looking here and there for the men, but they were not in the chapel, and so the Bishop sent out to see if they were in the yard. But they were not in the yard either, and all the news that they could get about them was from a shepherd who had seen them sloping away with themselves into the wood; thinking, the Bishop said, their mission was finished. Which it was indeed. All that was wanted, he went on, was proof that no miraculous conception had fallen out in this parish, and they had that. I would have liked you all to hear the story again from their lips, but it isn't the will of God that you should: for these holy men have gone back to the wilderness they came out of.

The Bishop was a great hand at a sermon and he said much more than I'm telling your honour, and would have said more than he did if a commotion had not begun in the chapel, Ligach suddenly falling faint or dead, it wasn't certain at first; so white and still was she, that many began saying that the news that her son was a by-blow had finished her. Water was sprinkled onto her face, and she was well rubbed; they got a drop of whisky between her teeth, and as soon as she opened her eyes the Bishop began to take pity on her,

and he told the people that she wasn't a bit to blame nor a scrap in the wrong. She had been, he said, a victim, and next door to a martyr, but a victim she was, one of Satan's many victims, for the devil never flinched from doing a big wrong if he could only get his own way, which, in this case, was the soul of a man who, until he gave in to temptation, had been a good man and a very good man; one who had left the wilderness because the health failed on him, who had sinned, but we must not judge a man by a single case, but by his whole life; Moling had sinned, not a doubt of that, but he had gone back to the wilderness to repent, he had not hummed nor hawed about it, old man though he was, and the Bishop churned on till Ligach had another faint.

This time her son carried her to the door of the church, putting back all the people who would help him, saying to them: let none lay a finger on my mother, I am here to care for her and to stick by her. At the chapel door he kissed her and at that she opened her eyes, and they put words in his mouth, and leading her back till they were on the threshold, he stood up to the Bishop in the pulpit, asking his lordship was a story told by three hermits to be believed rather than the story that the nuns of Cuthmore had known to be true for the last fourteen years. If the hermits had the rights of it why have they disappeared like evil spirits? he asked, and the people thought well of that, and the priests were frightened. Let the Bishop call the hermits back. At that the Bishop interrupted Martin, and said that he didn't know a thing about these hermits. Then why, asked Martin, do you believe them before the words of every sister in this convent? Women my mother lived with from her young youth, always known to them to be as pious as any nun of the nuns, often going stricter than the rule of the convent in her wish to please God, putting her life in the danger too. My mother's life is well known, so it is,

and you said yourself, my lord, that a man's life ought not to be judged by a single deed. Why then should the whole of my mother's life be struck out as nothing? No one accused your mother of sin: we hold her to be blameless, cried the Bishop from the pulpit. And by that you hold her to be a silly woman who believed a living man got up on the cross and let on to be God himself. My mother has never been known as an omadhaun, and if it was true would not the hermits have stood their ground here and had it out with me? If they went off with themselves it is because they were afraid of my questions! Let them be called back here if they are hermits itself, coming here and dropping their bad egg and skedaddling off with themselves. All the people gave in to the rights of that, saying: true for you, my boy, more power to the gossoon, and who hid the hermits?

The mistake Martin made was speaking of the hermits as if maybe they weren't hermits at all; for that gave the Bishops the handle they wanted and they called on the people not to hear another word from the man who accused the clergy of calling the devil to give a hand, which was the way the clergy got the people over to their side, and seeing that he and his mother hadn't a defender in the world, Martin said: I'll go on the track of the hermits and I'll bring Father Moling back with me too, and he'll tell you that the three hermits told a lie. So off he went with himself into the wilderness, and if I were to begin to tell your honour of the adventures he met and the queer things that happened to him we'd be here until the day after to-morrow morning; for Ireland was a wild place in the days gone by, and it was through the wildest parts he had to be trotting his boots in search of the hermits and Moling, looking for them in the forests and glens, along the naked seashores and from lake island to lake island, but sorra sight or light he could get of one of them, for Ireland

is too big a place for one man to go visiting the whole of it; and it was with a belly full of disappointment and a grown man that he came again to Loch Conn, the only place in the wide world he had a memory of. His heart was sick and sore, I'm telling you, as he stood in the place you stood in to-day, your honour, and he looking on a few ruined walls. Is it, says he to the goatherd that was passing by at the time, is it that these walls are all that are left of the convent of Cuthmore? There was a convent here one time, I've heard tell of it, the goatherd answered; but the nuns left it years ago because a nun of them thought she had been put in the straw by the Lord himself, but it turned out to be a robber that came through the chapel while she was praying before the cross.

The woman that is buried here was my mother, said Martin to the goatherd, and I have gone Ireland up and down and back and forth for the last seven years of my life, through forests and mountains, trying to come up with the hermits that brought the news that killed her. Bad and real bad the same news must have been, said the goatherd; what kind of news was it at all, and it that deadly? It was the news that Moling, who was the priest in the convent while my mother was carrying, went to the hermits in the wilderness to repent his sin, and confessed to them that he was my father, and they came along afterwards and told the Bishops. It's not likely at all, said the goatherd, for who ever heard in the world of a confession being told; if Moling had told that to the hermits they couldn't have told it to the Bishops, and you can take it from me that if the nun buried under this stone was your mother indeed, then your father was a robber that done a climb in through a window on a dark night and played his trick! Not a bit of it, said Martin, and a great argument and a great row began between the pair of them, and how it would

have turned out I don't know, only that the goatherd had to make off after his goats.

As soon as he got the one hobbled that was setting the others astray, he came back to ask Martin who the this and the that was his father, if it was neither the priest nor the robber, and they must have talked a bit before they separated; but the man my grandfather had the story from, and who got it from his father before him, told my grandfather that Martin believed his soul had come down from a star and went into Ligach's body while she was at her prayers—it's the queer thoughts do be in the heads of them heretics. Heretics, Alec? Heretic he was, sir, surely, though I wouldn't be saying anything about the soul coming down from a star, for can't the power of the devil work up above as well as down below? But he told the goatherd that his mother's name was under his own special care, and that everybody would believe in her virginity, for it was part of the new religion he was going to set up, with himself at the head of it.

And the new religion? I asked. It is said that Martin went off to Germany, Alec answered, and that he got married there to an escaped nun, for you couldn't set up a new religion or do any of them tricks in Ireland. Are you telling me, Alec, that he married Catherine Bora? That might be her name indeed, for the religion itself was no better than a whore. You don't mean that Ligach's son was Martin Luther? Faith, I wouldn't be saying anything or too much, and we standing at the edge of her grave, still and all the German Martin might easy have been one of the sons of our Martin, but here's the grave beside us, and you have the story as well as I can give it to you.

CHAP. XXXI.

AN excellent tea awaited me in the parlour, cakes of different kinds and many various jams, and Alec was

speaking in praise of the tea he had been served with in the kitchen, when Mr. Ruttledge's car came to fetch us. Its arrival was opportune, for another ten miles' walk, and five of it through a gusty bog, was more than I should care to undertake in the days of my youth, and now I looked forward to leaning back among comfortable cushions, and following in imagination the young man as he strove through the uttermost of night, hearing the stars, as he ascended the hill-sides, telling him that his mother's womb was quickened by a celestial visitant —an explanation of the mystery of his birth which he received eagerly, for he was one whose mother's virginity was dearer to him than his own life; one who would forgo his life rather than possess it at the price of his mother's maidenhood: a sentiment commoner than we think for, for who amongst us is there that has not looked at his father with hatred, or a grudge, in his heart?

A story, I said, that would have won its way into Pater's heart; and I fell to thinking how he would have written it, beginning perhaps:

And oh, the pity of it! the young man returning to the convent of Cuthmore after long years of vain searching for Moling and the three hermits, only to find her grave—her grave and his birthplace (the goatherd had told him that Ligach was buried in the cell in which she had lived all her life) and to stand by it, hopeful, looking on himself as the vindicator of her sad cause, his life devoted to that end—a long knight-errantry—and on the religion he would found as the warrant he needed of her virginity and his own Messiahship!

A beautiful story, I muttered and, catching sight at that moment of Alec's face, out of which all expression had vanished, I said: when he is not telling a story he is as common, as witless, as any man picked out of the streets of Westport. How very strange! and how unimportant! Not himself but his beautiful story is worth

considering—the beautiful story whose origin we must seek further back than the Middle Ages, whose counterparts we shall find certainly amongst the rudiments of the world; in the story of Bacchus, who visited Semele's grave before he set forth on his pilgrimage to found a new religion, and in the story of Hippolytus, the son on Antiope, the Amazon queen who fell in love with Theseus, King of Athens, for he too believed his mother to have been a virgin who was impregnated by some starry influence as she lay sleeping in a mountain cleft.

Alec, I cried, irritated by the sight of his impassive countenance, your story revives my interest in the Celtic Renaissance, and when I return to Dublin the first person I will tell it to will be dear Edward; it will strengthen his belief in the Renaissance. Who might he be? said Alec.

CHAP. XXXII.

ALEC accompanied me to the wicket, and before parting with him I said once again: I'm sorry I shall not see you all next week. You've told me some wonderful stories, and without doubt are the great shanachie of Connaught. Many's the one that has said the same to me, your honour, but if they were right itself, it isn't much of a brag to be above those going up for the competitions with no more than two and three and a half a story between the lot of them; and the fellow stuttering and stammering them out. But, compared with the shanachies that were in it in the old time, your honour, I'm not so much maybe.

I begged him to believe that he was unjust to his gifts and inspirations, and suppressed the smile that I felt to be at hover about my lips. I've never, I said, heard better stories than those you have told me, or a more spirited relation. So much have your stories pleased me that I don't know how the time will pass while you

are away. I'm longing to hear more stories. And what shall I be doing while you're away? It would be a great honour to me to hear a story from yourself, your honour, and all the week I'm away you can be turning it over in your mind. But you see, Alec, my stories are intended to be read; my stories are eye stories, yours are ear stories, and at an ear story you beat me easily. I'm far from thinking that, your honour, but whichever of us may come out first, I'd like to hear you tell a story.

Alec's blue, almost forget-me-not, eyes were fixed upon me and, cowed by them, I promised him a story. But you mustn't expect too much from me, I called down the road, for already I had begun to feel that I should be worsted in the contest.

He lifted his hat and went away, laughing, I thought, as if he were sure I could match his stories. But as I turned in the wicket it seemed to me that Alec had gone away laughing at the thought of my being able to match his grandfather's stories. Not an easy task, I said, especially the Marban story. An hour remains between now and dinner, I continued, and bethought myself of the high wood as a likely place to find a subject; and turning to Jim, I said: how often have you believed in the rabbit and been disappointed? It may be, however, your luck will be to get the rabbit, and mine to return with nothing in the shape of a story. You can come with me; we'll go hunting together; and Jim, lean and eager and hopeful, rushed ahead, leaving me to follow after, doubtful and already a little despondent, saying, to myself: to match his stories I shall need a very striking subject.

A story of modern life wouldn't impress Alec. He'd be more interested in a wonder tale—a legend or fairy tale, a fairy tale being better than a legend. But is there any difference between fairy tales and legends? I asked, and wasted some time considering the question from a literary point of view, awaking from my reverie

with the words: a wonder tale, on my lips. A wonder tale it must be, and if I tell him an astonishing story he'll speak up for me in the ale-houses: no shanachie will be put in front of me, saving himself, of course. Something dramatic will impress him more than a story of everyday life, however good it may be. A murder story! and I bethought myself of a woman whom a verdict of not-proven saved from the gallows and imprisonment, leaving her free to pick and choose a husband from out of a crowd of supplicating suitors; and, as if determined to close all possible avenues of further romances, she chose the dowdiest. But it would seem that romance was her lot in life, for after twenty years of virtuous married life her husband became possessed of the belief that she was planning how she might rid herself of him, and the fact that her interest was to keep and not to rid herself of him did not help him.

Day by day and night by night the most trivial accidents of life started his mind on the trail of some fresh suspicion, till at last he was driven to asking his wife to go away whither she pleased so long as she left the county. He gave her the choice of the child she would take with her (there were two), and it was not till the mother and child reached Chicago that her husband drew a happy breath. A striking subject, I said to myself, but one more suited to Nature's handling than to mine, for it is, shall we say, sufficient in itself. An unliterary subject—the opposite to *Esther Waters*—and I remembered how a single sentence in a newspaper gave me the subject of *Esther Waters*. We're always complaining of the annoyance that servants occasion us, but do we ever think of the annoyance we occasion servants? were the words that set me thinking of a young lady in love with her footman. The subject was rejected as unworthy, and a moment after it seemed to me that somebody anxious to learn a trade was the character

that enticed me. A kitchen-maid, I said. A kitchen-maid's adventure is an illegitimate child. On fourteen pounds a year she cannot and on sixteen pounds she can rear the child. The life of a human being at two pounds is my subject, and before I reached the Law Courts, distant about two hundred yards, the story of Esther Waters was decided upon.

The story of *The Brook Kerith* discovered itself as quickly one evening in the National Library. John Eglinton spoke to me of something he had been reading in which the theory that Jesus had not died but merely swooned on the cross was put forward, and the dream began instantly that if he did not die on the cross nothing was more likely than that he returned to the Essenes and met, years after, Paul, peradventure, in the cavern above the brook.

Accident furnished me with subjects for both books, but no literary accident may befall me in this lonely wood. My thoughts are wilful; I cannot fix them: the trees are beautiful and lean over the stream with noble gesture. The water tumbles from boulder to boulder merrily; without, however, mooting a story, I said. Blackbirds and thrushes are singing, but of what do they sing, of themselves or of nothing? My thoughts fled out of the high wood, crossed the seas, and in a second I was in Médan seeking a story in an account of a flood that we had just been reading in a newspaper. A whole family was drowned in it, all except an old man of eighty. Zola, impressed by Nature's indifference, wrote the story, and I wrote it too, but who wrote the better story could not be decided, Zola not knowing English (mine was in English) and I not caring to read his lest I should find it superior to mine.

But I'm now composing a story in competition with Alec Trusselby, and shall not find one if my thoughts will not come to heel.

All night I lay awake; and all the next day I spent in the high wood, seeking a subject, my thoughts distracted constantly in the wood by the beauty of the trees, by the birds in the stream and in the branches; and when I emerged from the wood, the hills set me thinking that if they would break their lofty silence they could tell me the tale of a beleaguered castle, with a fair-haired woman ascending the stairs, built between the walls. It is well to be fair-haired but it is not enough; something must happen to her. She must be carried away by a rival chieftain, and the battle must be waged from island to island. An Irish Helen I said, and began to curse myself for wasting time upon tawdry Walter Scott nonsense, as poetical as a story about a burning mill and no jot more so, one in which the author has not forgotten to include a strong love interest.

But sneers at Fleet Street are no help, and at the end of a short walk the story of a burning mill was dismissed as unworthy. The story I need, I continued, is a story not less perfect than those Alec told me, nor less complete, and dropped into a new consideration of the old woman who wouldn't give her money to the priest to rebuild the walls of his church, her need being a stained glass window. The word " need " reminded me of my own great need of a short story while writing *The Brook Kerith*—of a short tale complete in itself, relating the adventures of Jesus while in search of a ram of a particular breed. The same fear was upon me then as now; but the needed tale was vouchsafed to me the same afternoon in the train on my way to Epping. But will the needed tale be vouchsafed to me again? I asked, and watched my thoughts scouting at adventure, one of them at last espying an old monk who had just finished telling the story of Lilith on the balcony overlooking the Brook Kerith. A Talmudic tale, I said, a lilt, such as a reaper might sing while reaping—a folk-tale told over the fireside, hardly as much. She is men-

tioned in *Faust*. Faust asks Mephistopheles: who is that yonder? and he answers: Lilith, Adam's first wife. Beware of her, for she excels all women in the magic of her locks. If a young man should get entangled in them she will never set him free again.

Michelangelo seems to have painted Lilith as an eternal temptation; Rossetti translated Michelangelo's design into verse, but neither seems to have perceived the story that the old chronicler's lilt stands for. As likely as not the old chronicler didn't guess that a great story lay behind his brief record. The meaning of the story was perchance forgotten when he wrote, and his summary is but a cocoon left over to be unwound by me. And the more I considered the cocoon the more full of thread it seemed to me to be. And all the next day and all the day after were spent in the high wood by the babbling water, unwinding, forgetful of Alec, absorbed in the story, happy in the conviction that were I to search the world over I should never find a woodland more like the Garden of Eden than this one.

These trees, I said, sheltered our first parents: if not these trees their progenitors, and who knows that Lilith and Adam may not have drunken from this stream? If not from this one, from one like it. I am walking in Eden without a doubt of it; the only difference between this wood and the woods of Eden is that there must have been fruit trees in Eden and there is none here, not even a nut bush, some hips and haws only. But it's easy to imagine a few fruit trees; besides, this is but a corner of the domain that God gave to Adam and into which Lilith came from the underworld. The story is coming, I said, the story is coming, and at the end of the week I went to relate it to Alec in the woods of Ilanaidi. A pretty adventure, I said, on my way thither, and I stopped to consider the style in which I was to tell it; and while looking round admiring the far-away air

of the plaintive little country, it seemed to me that every language, except its own, the beautiful Anglo-Irish idiom, odorous as the newly upturned clod of earth, would be inappropriate, and knowing myself to be as imitative as a monkey, I asked myself if I should be able to pipe my tune in it: with some outbreaks into Fleet Street, of course, I said. But he'll be listening to the story and will not hear the outbreaks, and if he does hear them they will seem to him the very thing he should admire. alas!

And in regretful mood I continued walking, but very slowly, for there was a thought at the back of my mind that hesitated to come into words. At last I asked myself if it were wise to translate a Hebrew story into peasant idiom. As well might I translate Congreve's *Comedies* into the same, I added, a little further on; derisively, of course: and the passer-by must have descried an expression of perplexity on my face, for I had begun to think that if I told my story in Anglo-Irish all the characteristics by which Alec knew me would disappear, and, worst of all, he might think I was putting a joke on him. But related in London idiom my story will be like music played on a worn-out piano. Good heavens! I said, I shall make no sort of a match in this competition, and might have run home, if Alec, who was before me by the great stone, sacred in my memory, Liadin and Curithir having met there, hadn't at that moment risen to his feet.

CHAP. XXXIII.

IT seemed at first as if he had forgotten my promise to relate a story, and I honestly hoped that we might go fern-gathering instead. But at last the words came: have you brought the story with you, your honour? Yes, I answered; I've a story to tell you, and it's of Adam's first wife. But Adam's first wife was Eve, he rapped out,

and more energetically than I had expected; and to quiet him I said that many stories related to the famous garden, and that the one I was going to tell was from the Talmud. The name at once quelled any rebellious spirit that may have been in him, and he allowed me to inform him that there are two sacred books of Hebrew law, one known as the Bible, an inspired work, and another work, which is the Talmud, uninspired and four times as large as the Bible. And from the Talmud, Alec, we learn that Adam had a first wife, and there is a broken relation which I have pieced together, the right of every shanachie, as you know well. Who should know better than yourself how stories are spun and woven, you the great shanachie of Connaught? The stories you tell me you learnt from your grandfather: he read them in books, but added to them, and you developed them just as the Hungarian gipsy develops on his fiddle the snatches of song that he hears the reapers singing in the cornfields. I think I understand, sir, Alec said, and without leaving him time for reflection out of which might spring thoughts of his parish priest, who had never heard of Lilith, I began:

A great temptress she was, greater than our neighbour's wife, greater than the scarlet woman, and the daughters of Baal of whom you have no doubt heard in church. Sorra one of any of them names have I heard of, your honour. But all the same I'd like to hear the story of Adam's first wife, no matter the book she comes out of. A great trouble, I said gloomily, she always was to Adam, leaving him often without ever saying when she was going to return, going away like a bird, still better as a wreath of mist which melts in the morning sun, and returns when the sun sinks behind the mountains. And once she was gone there was silence, nobody to bid him the hour of the day or to say: here's a fine fig here, or would you like a rosy peach better? Nor anyone to say: I'm as dry as a limekiln, and could drink a jug of water

at a draught, if you'd go to the river for me. His life lay like a lump of lead upon him, and his legs got too shaky to bear his body; he would come tottering down the path, his knees knocking together, not knowing how to bear with his grief, for Lilith had gone once more from him, and as was usual with her, without saying whither she was going or when she was coming back. She has gone, he said to himself, and henceforth the memory of her will be burning in me always; and he walked back and forth, unable to comprehend how he could go on living day after day in his garden, which already had begun to lose its beauty in his eyes, never seeing or hearing of her again.

He could no longer wander through the garden taking pleasure in the graceful trees, the shady dells and sunny glades, for every spot was associated with her. The flowering bank beneath the fig-tree reminded him of many sweet midnight visitations, and he thought that the moss still retained the impress of her head. A great big sigh escaped him, and he turned away from the beautifulest parts of the river, for since her departure the river was running very shallow indeed between long gravel reaches, and he wearied of the pair of ousels that flitted from boulder to boulder: they are faithful to each other, why did she abandon me? he said, and fell to thinking, asking himself if Lilith came to him from Lucifer's domain by Iahveh's order or if she were sent by Lucifer to tempt him from his allegiance. None can answer these questions but Iahveh himself, he said, and he turned into the twisting path that led up the hill-side to the praying stone that he had raised there. Iahveh, Alec, was the first Hebrew God, and I don't think I'm going too far if I say a sort of tribal God.

Adam threw himself on the ground, and bowed himself three times: my God, hearken to me, for I come to thee in great distress of mind and body, not having seen the golden-haired Lilith for many days, and without her the

garden in which thou hast placed me has become a wilderness in my eyes; bid her return to me, else I perish. My God, my God, hear thy servant Adam, for he calls to thee to save him from his wretched plight. My God, my God, hearken to thy servant, again Adam cried out, but he had to cry many times before he could rouse Iahveh, who was dreaming in his golden chair of the last stubborn fight before the archangels were able to shut Lucifer up in hell.

At length Adam's prayers awakened him, and a muttering began in his great beard. Adam calls me, Iahveh said, and having gained his ear, Adam rose to his feet and spoke outright, telling Iahveh that Lilith had left him without saying she would return, as she had done many times; but now I know, Lord, that she will never return to me again, unless thou commandest her to do so. Left thee for ever? Iahveh replied, and there was some tone of astonishment in his voice that perplexed Adam. Lilith! Iahveh repeated, as if he had forgotten her, and when he inquired of Adam Lilith's reason for leaving him, Adam related the story: that Lilith had left him because he prayed morning and evening at the praying stone and inquired all things of God. Thereat God was moved in the imagination of his thoughts towards his servant Adam, and raised up by God's praise Adam continued his doleful recitations, saying that Lilith never avouched whether her visits were within God's knowledge or outside of it, in a measure embittering the pleasure that I took from her; for, Lord, I would obey thee in all things, and have now come to ask if Lilith, by thy good will, may return to me. But if it be not thy will I will try to bear my life of loneliness in resignation, repenting all my days of the great sin I was guilty of towards thee in heaven long ago. Lilith, Iahveh answered, for now he remembered her, was one of the angels like thyself, Adam, who neither took sides for nor against me. All these have been con-

demned to wander on a gloomy border-land. All but thou. I have placed thee in a beautiful garden, thy transgression being lighter than theirs. Iahveh is a just God.

But, Lord, is it by thy will that Lilith comes forth from gloomy glens and sterile clefts to visit me in the garden? Neither for nor against my will, but Iahveh is well pleased with his servant Adam for not having listened to the coaxing voice of the temptress who would have beguiled him from his lord God. My lord, if I have earned thy praise, reward thy servant with Lilith, and be sure that although I shall take pleasure in her golden hair I shall not cease to offer prayers to thee morning and evening by the praying stone that I have raised to thy honour. Offering will I bring—— My servant, Adam, I am well pleased with thee, Iahveh answered. Return to the shadowy peacefulness of thy garden and leave me to consider how Lilith may best be persuaded to return to thee.

The silence of the sunny mount was not broken again. Adam prayed, inly thanking God for his great mercies, a great sigh, however, escaping from him as he lay upon the ground, lifting his head from it from time to time, bowing and rejoicing to himself that his humility should have won from God a promise to use his power to persuade Lilith to return to Eden for Iahveh couldn't compel Lilith, she having passed beyond his power into that of Lucifer. But Adam did not doubt that Iahveh would be able to persuade her. It may be that if she refuses he will thrust her out of the border-land into hell; and he found great pleasure in his thoughts, for at the back of his mind was the certainty that very soon Lilith would be given back to him, whether in the middle of the night or when he dozed on the sunny bank he did not know, and it mattered little when, so long as she was returned to him.

As he descended the twisting path to the dell he

remembered a corner by the river's bank in which he could dream of Lilith more intently than elsewhere, under the spotted branches of some plane-trees that were, however, still full of leaves. The river swirled by almost silent, and the willow weed wilted, its life having been lived; only a few faded and torn blooms still clinging to the stalks. But Adam had seen the flowers return: the word return had a significant beauty for him: Lilith was about to return, he said, and he watched the water ousels fly up and down the stream, alighting on the boulders with the same eagerness as when he had watched them while waiting for Lilith to appear to him. The sky, too, entranced him, for when he raised his head he could see between the mottled branches white clouds unfolding. A squirrel cracked a nut in the branches above him, the shells fell at his feet and he said: the season of the nuts has come; Lilith and I will share them together, and he remembered the different parts of the garden where the different nuts grew large and rich. Nuts and fruit we shall have in plenty this year, he continued, and suddenly his thoughts broke away and he began to ask himself what Iahveh's designs might be.

He will send forth angels to seek her if she be on earth, but if she have returned to Lucifer God cannot enter the portals of the world below and say that she must be given up. We shall have to wait, and ages will pass by. His heart failed him a little, but revived soon after, for it seemed to him that he could hear the sound of wings in the air. He is sending his angels. Doubtless Michael, Gabriel and Raphael have been chosen for they are the swiftest of God's messengers.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THE sound I hear is not the sound of wild geese speeding northward, he said, and his ears had not deceived him;

the wings he heard were those of Michael, Gabriel and Raphael come from the battlements of heaven, flying over continents and seas, and always in circles, lest any corner of the earth wherein Lilith might be hidden should escape their eyes. But there may be days, and weeks, and months, Adam said, before they find her. It was as he had said, days and weeks and months passed before the angels flying over the earth cried to one another: night is coming on, the clouds are thickening; soon there will be no more light; it might be well for us to descend. A fair island lies in the sea below us, Michael said; one that we have often overlooked. And Gabriel answered Michael: as likely as elsewhere she may be yonder. Raphael and myself will be glad to rest our wings; and balancing themselves like the gulls, they descended, and alighting on a long reach of white strand, they sat there resting, and watching the warm breeze coming and going, shaking the juniper bushes with which the tussocked grass was sprinkled, shaking them and leaving them still again.

The earth is not without its beauty, the angels were thinking, as they sat listening to the waves creeping up into the bay over the ribbed strand, retiring and advancing, and creeping up to the angels, obliging them to retire to some rocks whither the tide could not come. A beautiful evening, Michael said, for beyond the bay, seaward, there was a bar of gold and a flush of crimson. There are pleasant things to be seen in this world, Michael continued, and this island seems a spot that our witch might choose to hide herself in. It seems to be filled with woods, and we may find her in some clough or dell tressing her hair, a favourite occupation of hers, so it is said. And they began to talk about the neutral angels and the miserable lot assigned to them to wander always in the border-land between earth and hell. All are there except Adam, and Lilith is sometimes in the deepest circles of hell with Lucifer himself, whose aider and abetter she is,

and sometimes wandering over the earth scheming how she may embarrass the lord. Whereas Adam is a poor, weak creature, said Gabriel. The only one, Michael responded, whose sin was so slight that to our lord Iahveh the borderlands seemed too great a punishment for him. So our lord and master placed him in a garden, Michael continued, and methinks that Lilith's visits thither were decreed not by him but by Lucifer, whom he threw into hell after many great battles: you remember how my spear struck him between the eyes as he led his legions against us up the battlements. It was Michael's way to ramble on, and, heedless of him, Gabriel and Raphael watched the moon, like a white moth, that had fluttered peradventure out of the earth's orbit, till at last the waves rushing over the white strand wetted the shingled bank on which the angels were seated. We had better be looking out for some cave inland where we can pass the night, Gabriel said; and Raphael answered he was cold though he had drawn his wings closer round him.

A great bird went by: he, too, seems cold, Raphael cried, and is seeking a warm roost; let us go up into the island and find a quiet corner in the woods. Raphael's counsel was approved by Michael and Gabriel, and Iahveh's three messengers retired from the shore, and picking their way through the juniper bushes they penetrated through the brambles into the clough, and lifting a curtain of trailing plants, Gabriel said: behold! the cave we are looking for. And stooping their heads the angels passed under a roof of flowers and tendrils into a great hall, in which lay a pool and in it the moth-like moon they had seen without; at which the angels were astonished; but on looking up through a fissure in the rocks and seeing the moon still in the sky they were at one that there was a beauty on earth that seemed lacking in heaven: whereupon Michael said: we have been in the atmosphere of the earth now for forty days, flying

in search of Lilith, and have lost some of our angelic nature; let us hope that we may find her and return to heaven lest we become contaminated.

Gabriel and Raphael did not share Michael's fears and were glad of the white sand with which the floor of the cave was covered: we shall awaken to-morrow as celestial as the day when we left the ramparts of heaven. Iahveh would not have sent us on this errand if we were to be contaminated, Gabriel said. We are immortal, Raphael answered, and he asked Michael if that weren't so, but Michael answered nothing, he being asleep. But it was not many minutes before he began to moan and toss himself in his sleep, setting Gabriel and Raphael wondering: what has befallen our brother? for he murmurs now in his sleep, so loudly that we cannot hear the doves in the clefts of the rocks, Gabriel whispered. He murmurs, Raphael said, somewhat like the doves; and Gabriel replied: but now his cooing has changed into cries: the doves go away out of the clefts with a clang of wings; what can have befallen our brother? The island is enchanted, Raphael whispered; let us away. But, Gabriel answered, we cannot leave our brother in the power of the enchantress.

At that moment a great cry broke from Michael and he rolled into the moonbeam and lay in it gazing at the moon, recovering himself at last sufficiently to overlook his brethren who were pretending sleep. And they seeming to him to be in deep sleep he ventured to his feet and passed under the curtain of trailing plants out of the cave. Is our brother playing us false? Gabriel whispered to Raphael. Has she bidden him to her in a dream? Raphael asked; and the twain rose, and going to the mouth of the cave they stood like stocks and watched their brother, in amazement, and he walking down to the sea and bathing therein like one who wished to purify himself after sin. Michael must not know that we have

observed him, Gabriel said. The spell of the enchantress has certainly fallen upon him, Raphael muttered; let us to our beds, and, convinced that his brethren slept, Michael laid himself down. But they had not slept long before Gabriel began to sigh in his sleep, and very soon his sighs became moans; he tossed himself, lifting himself bridge-wise, falling back again, at last rolling over on his side.

She has visited brother Gabriel in his dream, Raphael whispered to Michael, and Michael said: hush! Let us pretend to be asleep, and just as Gabriel and Raphael had seen Michael go down to the sea to bathe himself, they saw Gabriel do the same, and were astonished thereby.

Now when Gabriel returned to the cave he spied upon his brethren to make sure they were sleeping and had learned nothing of what had befallen him, and they feigning sleep so well that he believed them to be asleep, he laid himself down. But sleep had not long obtained hold of him when Raphael was overtaken by a dream of the enchantress; his sighs and moans were the same as his brothers' had been; and when at last his desire was eased in one sharp pang, he did as they had done; he went to the sea for purification, and believing his brethren to be really asleep when he returned to the cave, he chuckled, saying to himself: in the morning I will question them, and they will give evasive answers, but I know that Michael dreamed of her; Michael knows that Gabriel dreamed of her, but none knows that I too was taken in her net of pleasure and of pain; and while thinking how he might discern between the twain he fell asleep listening to a nightingale singing in the vine in the fissure of the rocks. Other nightingales began soon after and the birds awakened the tired angels. We have no such music in heaven, Gabriel said; and Michael answered: we might take one of these birds to teach our choristers.

And Raphael muttered: we must not let our thoughts dwell on the pleasures of the earth, for our habitation is with God among the peaks; let us not forget that we are the angels of the lord.

These admonitions from Raphael were felt to be uncalled for and unjust, but the three angels were overcome by the desire of sleep; they slept despite the chorusing of the birds and it was broad daylight when they awoke. We have overslept ourselves, said Michael, and lifting the curtain of creeping plants, he added: a lovely morning awaits us. On these words Gabriel and Raphael arose, and blinking still, they stumbled into what seemed to them the most beautiful day that had unclosed before their eyes since Iahveh sent them on their errand. And thanking God for having sent them on it, they walked about the island admiring the woods, the dells within the woods, the reaches of white sand leading to the sea and the rocks rising above the sea. We have not alighted as often as we should have done; we have wearied ourselves flying from dawn to sunset, Raphael murmured to himself, with the intention that his companions should hear him, which they did, and Michael, remembering how he had admonished them overnight, lest their thoughts should linger on the many beauties they beheld in the world, answered him: yesternight my words were that we should not think overmuch of what we saw and heard in this world, but remember always that we are archangels. The beauty of the morning refreshes the eyes, and the air is sweet in the lungs, Raphael answered, and the angels stopped on the outskirts of the woods, so they might watch the love dance of the butterflies. Shall we cross the flowering plain, Gabriel asked, and Michael answered: yes, for in that ring of trees she may be sitting; and Raphael, the slyest of the three, asked his brother why, having searched the earth all over in vain for Lilith, he should think to find her in that ring of trees. Enchant-

ment was abroad last night, Michael answered; didst find it so, Raphael? And Raphael answered: I heard sighing and moaning as of doves; and they were speaking of the songs of the nightingales when they entered the ring of trees in the middle of the plain, in the centre of which was a well, and by it, as Michael anticipated, Lilith sat combing her locks. So you've found me at last, she said to the angels, and Michael answered: thou talkest as one that expecteth visitors. And she replied: expecteth you, yes, and a long time past, for many is the time I've caught sight of your wings in this well, and expected your alighting in the flowering meadow, but you went away north and south, leaving me waiting for you here.

I have watched your pursuit of me, for in this well all things are mirrored; and from this spot I need not turn to know everything that befalls the world.

And last night—— said Michael. Last night, Lilith interrupted, I saw you sweep down and alight on to the firm sand after long flying. You went up the beach together in search of a cave, and I was with you during the night in dreams, she continued, causing the angels to hang down their heads ashamed. But Lilith being among the fallen angels was in no wise ashamed, and extorted from Michael a confession that he had followed a white phantom in his dreams, and overtaking her among the woods, she had whispered to him: seek some soft bank of flowers. They had wandered in search of this bank and were always on the point of discovering it, but the flowers vanished. At last a pang of pleasure or pain, he knew not which, divided them. I saw thee no more, he said. And now, Gabriel, emulate the truthfulness of thy brother's words, and tell me in what form I came to thee, in what form thou sawest me. Thou camest upon me, Gabriel said, as I was on my way to obey a summons to attend upon our lord the mighty Iahveh; thou camest

upon me, and I begged thee to allow me to answer his summons, promising to return to thee. But thou wouldst not hide thy bosom with thy hair, and we sought to hide ourselves behind a cloud; but Michael and Raphael, who were jealous of me, dissolved the cloud into rain. And now, Raphael, Lilith said, tell thy dream to me, for I was with thee too. And Raphael, who was filled with subterfuge, stood by more embarrassed than his brethren, and tried to elude the witch's examination, but Lilith pursued him with questions, and the companions turned upon him and said: we were awakened by sighs and moans; we feigned sleep, but through our half-opened eyelids we saw thee leave the cave and go down and bathe thyself in the sea. Whereupon Raphael, seeing that further concealment was unavailing, answered that all he had seen or felt of the temptation that had visited him in the night were two red lips, winged lips, he said, that hovered over me and sank upon my lips, sending a sting between at which all my flesh shuddered: for a moment it seemed to me that I was lifted into an ecstasy more intense than heaven: I seemed to dissolve. At last thou hast found the truth, Raphael, Lilith said, and it was thus in many shapes that I visited Adam on the flowering bank in Eden, between sleeping and waking, and in deep dreams.

We have come, said Michael, interrupting Lilith suddenly, to ask thee if thou wilt return to Adam; we have come from the lord Iahveh, shall we say thy God? Say it not, said Lilith. You have come from Iahveh to ask me to return to Adam, and my answer is that my lord is Lucifer and he would not have me obedient to any other God. Not to exact obedience, said Raphael, have we come; not to exact obedience, Gabriel insisted. And standing on either side of Lilith, who continued combing her golden locks, regaling herself with her beauty reflected in the still waters of the well, the angels besought her to return to Adam; and she answered: I cannot abjure

Lucifer, he has power over me as the lord hath power over you. It is by his will that I visited Adam and it is by his will that I left Adam. A last word we would have with thee, Michael said. Knowest thou, Lilith, that if thou wilt not return to Adam Iahveh will create out of earth a fairer woman for Adam's enjoyment and companionship in the garden. A fairer woman than I am, Lilith answered, raising her head from the well, and it is you who were with me last night that say it? I doubt the power of the lord in heaven to do what you say. And the angels who were smitten with doubt whether she had not spoken the truth feared to look upon her longer lest their doubts should be strengthened regarding the power of the God they served.

We will return, said they, to the lord with thine insolent answer, and she saw the angels spread their wings and depart up into the beautiful morning sky, passing over the clouds into the blue spaces beyond. They will reach the ramparts of heaven before many hours have passed, she said to herself.

CHAP. XXXV.

IAHVEH is impatient and restless, Lilith said, for she could see him in her well looking over the battlements awaiting his archangels; and she could see too the scouting cohorts of seraphim and cherubim that he had sent forth, seeking the wings of their brethren on every horizon. At last one of the winged messengers stood before the lord. Michael and Gabriel and Raphael have been seen by our distant brethren, he said, and they have passed the word on to us. I have arrived with the news for the lord, glad to be the first to bring it. At these words the angels broke into song, and spreading out their wings they formed circle-wise around the lord, who, after thanking them, dismissed them abruptly, his mind

being perturbed and beset with thoughts of the news that his archangels were bringing him.

All things were reflected in his wisdom; he was distraught thereby, and Michael, Gabriel and Raphael dared not advance from the battlement on which they had alighted. Our lord Iahveh, said Michael, after many wanderings we return to thee. Is Lilith returning to Adam? the lord asked. We were flying one night above an island—— Michael began. Her words were, Lord, Gabriel interjected, that she was one of Lucifer's vassals and obedient only unto him. Whereat a cloud gathered on the lord's face, and Michael and Raphael regretted Gabriel's admission that Lilith had vowed herself unto Satan. Whereupon Iahveh's face was like the whirlwind, and the mountains shook with his voice. She will not return to Adam, the Lord repeated, and the subaltern angels hid themselves in the clefts. A companion must be given to Adam, for I have promised him one. Tell me of your discovery of Lilith; and begin thy narrative, he said, raising his eyes to Michael, Michael began: But God was listless and gave a poor ear to the story of the great flying excursion, wonderful though it was; and Gabriel, seeing that Michael was speaking dryly, began to grow impatient, and might have related the curious dreams that befell them in the cave if the Lord had not dismissed his archangels suddenly, saying: leave me to meditate. And for many days the Lord sat in his golden chair, his brow darkened by the shadows of coming difficulties, his thoughts revolving in memories of his wars against the highest and best-beloved of the archangels.

Lucifer had plotted against him, the cohorts had been at battle pursuing the foe or being pursued by the foe, æon after æon. Heaven was without music of harp and lyre, only the clash of swords and shields was heard echoing from æon to æon, while the war was pursued from star to star across the sky and down the sky, angels

falling into the pit and rising out of the pit to renew the fight. But at last the Lord's angels discovered a way to victory, the evil angels were enclosed within the gates of hell, and when the gates clashed upon them, the Lord said: we are at peace again; the weariness of battle is over, and peace broods once more in heaven. But my perplexities are not over yet. I have created an earth so that I may have a garden in which to place Adam, whom I wish to separate from the other neutrals. Let my will be done, said the Lord, and instantly Adam found himself in a garden with Lilith for his ghostly visitor, till Lucifer, who still plotted against the Lord, bade her away from Adam, for in his evil heart he hoped through Adam to bring Iahveh's kingdom to naught. He must have a companion, said the Lord, for after his great victory over Lucifer the Lord's heart was softened, and he was moved to abide in peace in his heaven among the angels, listening to their glorifications, to their praise, to their songs, to the music of harp and of timbrel year after year, century after century, æon after æon. But over Iahveh himself is a law, and by virtue of that law I am compelled to create, to equalise all things, to pair all. Again the Lord was troubled, and he asked himself in vain why this was so, for was he not, since Lucifer's overthrow, almighty? almighty, yes, but he must create, though his creations might lead to his own destruction in some distant time. A fate there is behind the gods surely, he muttered once again and, compelled by his fate, he descended one night into the garden of Eden and reached out his hand to take a rib out of the side of Adam, and with that rib he made a creature like unto Adam, and when Adam woke in the morning he found God's last work, Eve, sleeping by his side.

God was pleased with his work, and Adam wondered at her shape; Eve's sloping shoulders surprised him, and her bosom even more so; he could not understand

why she should bulge under her throat; and he said she is so heavy about the hips, that she'll never be much good at the climbing of trees after fruit; I shall have to climb and shake the branches for her. The other differences in her shape seemed to him still more strange; she seemed to him incomplete, and wondering at her incompleteness he walked towards the river, thinking that she seemed to need washing and would smell the sweeter after plunging. As he was about to turn back to ask her to come to the river with him he remembered that to rouse her would be unkind, so peaceful was her sleep and so healthful did it seem. So he turned towards the river again, but his steps had awakened Eve, who, sitting up on her buttocks, watched him, and the instinct of pursuit arising in her in an instant, she followed him, stumbling over the ground in her great hurry.

Over the brink he went head foremost into a deep pool, and she, knowing nothing of water and its dangers, tumbled in after him, making a great plop, fortunately causing him to look round, and, seeing what had happened, Adam dived. He didn't recover her, and dived again, and this time he managed to get hold of her by the hair, and by it he towed her to the bank and laid her out, wondering why she lay so still. It might be well to let some of the water run out of her, he said to himself, so he turned her over, and when she had vomited forth her eyes opened, and it was not long before she was sitting up and asking Adam to tell her what had fallen out. Thou art Eve, he answered, the companion that Iahveh promised me. We are in Eden; and the river is for swimmers, and until thou hast learnt to swim thou must not venture into the deep pools. But I will teach the art to thee; and it pleased Eve to hear that she was going to learn from Adam. But shall I go under the water? she asked. Adam answered that he would support her. She liked to hear that his hand would be under her chin.

But her thoughts turning from to-morrow suddenly, she said: but thou hast not told me how I came hither. Adam looked forward to telling her the whole story, for since he had washed her as she lay unconscious on the bank, and disentangled her hair, she had begun to seem different in his eyes, and they went through the garden together, Adam showing the fruit trees that abounded, giving her fruit to eat, and Eve gathering flowers, wherewith to weave into a wreath for her hair.

Iahveh gave thee to me for I was lonely in this garden, he said, and her eyes brightened, and she said: who is Iahveh? Hush, said Adam, the sacred name must be spoken more reverently; he put his fingers to his lips, and the alarmed twain stood gazing at the pillared fir-trees that grew round the stone altar, their skins drying quickly in the warm air. A touch of autumn was in it, but the sun was glowing, and when the lonely cloud that had hidden the sun for a minute passed on, the garden by the spell of contrast seemed more beautiful than before. Come thou with me to his altar, Eve: I would thank him for his gift to me of thee, and they went up the path, and as soon as he had thrown himself on the ground and bowed himself three times, and muttered in his beard, he arose and, taking Eve's hand in his, he said: by Iahveh's altar I will tell the story of Iahveh's wars against Lucifer.

Eve listened because Adam's voice pleased her, but she would rather have heard his voice on a subject nearer to them than the clashing of shields of long ago, the hurling of swords and the thrusting of spears in the abyss; and despite her desire to please Adam her thoughts were often away from the conflicts that had taken place in the middle air over against the ramparts of heaven and about the gates of the pit.

Adam was at this time a young man of comely presence, tall and lithe, and Eve would not have had his shoulders different from what they were. They flanged out from

the neck nobly, and she liked his long, thin, sinewy arms, and the big hands that she could see were stronger than hers. His chest is flat and the hips narrow; his legs are long and sinewy, she murmured, and hoped that he liked hers. Now of what are you thinking? he said. I was thinking, she answered, that if thou hadst headed the army of Lucifer thou wouldst have conquered Iahveh. Adam's face filled with shadow, so lightly did she speak the name, and he said: thou must not think such wicked thoughts, and leaving the altar he paced before her. His steps pleased her, so strong and rhythmical were they, and she enjoyed his back, so strong did it seem. Thou art the most beautiful thing in this garden, she said, and my eyes will never weary of overlooking thee. Now what is this hairy thing I see, and what use is it? she said. And Adam did not answer her. He was thinking the while of the great battles of long ago, the clashing of the shields and the dense array of spears, but at last her hands awoke him from his reverie. Don't pull it so, he said, and she loosed his beard. Why have I not one? she asked; my poor face is bare. But it is more beautiful bare than hairy. I have often wished to be without my beard. But I would not wish thee without it, she answered, and each was a gazing stock to the other. Adam's muscles were Eve's admiration, and the sweet roundness of Eve's limbs, Adam's. Why these breasts? he said. Dost not like them? she asked. Yes; they are beautiful. How flat and shapeless am I. Say not so, thou art very beautiful, Adam. How much stronger, how much fleeter, and she continued to find pleasure in Adam as they walked along and across the garden under the fruit trees, eating of the purple figs and the pink peaches, Adam showing how the fruit must be skinned before it can be eaten and Eve doing as she was bidden: though her appetite had not yet begun to awaken she ate the fruit, for she could not

do anything except which she thought would please Adam. But thou wilt not listen to the valour of the angels, said Adam. I will listen, she replied, when I grow weary of looking upon thee. But wilt thou grow weary of me? Adam asked. And they fell to pondering on the chance words that had been uttered. At last Eve asked: whither leads that path? It leads, he answered, to the fig-trees, under whose shelter I sleep at night. Let us go thither, for I would share thy bed, she said. Thou shalt share it, Eve, but before we lie down together thou must learn to pray to Iahveh.

Eve had little heart for learning prayers, and his face telling his disapprobation, she said: thou art not satisfied with me. And on these words they fell sleep on the flowering bank. And they slept till morning arose on the garden, as children do.

CHAP. XXXVI.

IT was the sparrows twittering in the vine that awoke Adam, and laying his hand on Eve's shoulder, who was still asleep, he said: the day is beginning; come, let us offer thanks to Iahveh for the joyful light, and Eve, rousing herself from her sleep, said: thy will be done, and she followed Adam up the hill-side, and imitated him in all things, throwing herself on the ground and bowing herself three times; and when this ritual was accomplished she gave ear to Adam's prolonged mutterings, and strove to understand them, but soon her brain wearied, and she might have renounced the task of trying to follow his repentance for the sins he had committed in heaven if she had not suddenly heard the name of Lilith. Now who can Lilith be? One of the angels of whom Adam tells such long stories? she asked herself. Somebody he knew before the fall, she added, and resolved

to await an occasion when she could inquire of him who Lilith might be. Nor was it long before she heard him speak of Lilith's visits to the garden. By whose orders did she come to the garden: Iahveh's or Lucifer's? she asked herself, and the question would have been put to Adam if he had not been muttering prayers, and if the thought had not come to Eve that it might be well for her to get a confession from Adam that the memory of the days he had spent in the garden with Lilith were still dear to him. Iahveh is but a blind, she said, as she set the peaches and figs she had gathered before Adam; and while he ate thereof she began to speak to him of their thanksgivings, and offerings of fruits, and to tell the hope she cherished that the day's work before them would be pleasing to Iahveh, making herself pleasing to Adam thereby and advancing herself still further in his favour when she returned to the stories he had told her yesterday as if she had been considering them ever since: the clashing of the shields when Iahveh's angels descended to give battle unto Lucifer; how Gabriel whirled his sword and an entire legion fell before it, and how a plump of spears fell back before Michael's spear. On these feats and on the recital of Raphael's ruses in outflanking the enemy, Adam relied to engage her mind, and remembering how languidly she had listened yesterday he was overjoyed at seeing that he had in the main misjudged her, and began to relate the story over again from the beginning, watching her carefully all the time; but her attention never relaxed, and she showed desire to be instructed, saying: thou wast wise not to join with Lucifer's angels, for Iahveh is all-powerful, and knowing him to be all-powerful, thou hadst the wisdom to refrain. I knew the power of Iahveh the almighty, Adam answered. And Lucifer, she said, must have known that too. Yes, he too knew him to be an almighty God. Then why, she

asked innocently, did Lucifer rebel against that which he knew to be almighty?

At this question a cloud came into Adam's face, and he began a tangled explanation to which Eve listened, knowing well that the thing she desired to hear would soon be made known to her. So she had patience with Adam, and listened to his prolix relation that although God was almighty he had, as it were, delegated the administration of evil to Lucifer, reserving to himself the administration of all good things. This was the first circle of thought into which Adam descended. He descended into still further circles, and with Eve's eyes upon him he couldn't doubt that she listened. But did she understand? he asked himself, and was satisfied that she did. And then, as if picking up her thoughts a little further on, Eve said: thou wast lonely in the garden before he gave me to thee? and Adam answered innocently: not lonely, for there was Lilith. At which she opened her eyes as if she had not heard the name before, and asked: who is Lilith? Who is Lilith? Adam answered; and he seemed to drop back into a past time and away from her.

The sound of her name carried him as a sudden breeze carries a barque from the shore out into the sea. He seemed to forget the woman by his side, and when he spoke it was not Eve that prompted him to speak but a sudden memory. Lilith, he said, was my wife before thou camest. We were angels in heaven before the fall. Adam's thoughts seemed to die away, and Eve had to awaken him with her voice. And she came to visit thee in the garden? She came to me, he answered, between waking and sleeping and in dreams. Didst never see her in the noonday as thou seest me? Eve asked. And Adam knew not how to shape an answer that Eve would understand, for Lilith was clear to Adam only so long as

he did not try to express her in words, or think about her too closely.

The mist at the edge of the stream vanishes in the morning when the sun's heat is strong, and the mist returns to the edge of the stream when the sun sinks behind the hills. She was evanescent, Alec, as the mist, yet she was very real, more real than Eve sitting by him; Adam could not put his thoughts into words and Eve would not have understood him if he had said: Lilith is the reality behind the appearance. By appearance I mean all that our senses reveal to us. An orange will serve for an example. We know an orange only through our senses—sight, hearing, touch and smell—but it may be held that there is something behind the appearance and that if we willingly forgo the appearance we reach reality, that which is behind the appearance. You find it difficult to follow this, Alec, but the hermit that you told me of, Scothine, who lived in the woods on watercress and on the crags by the sea on gulls' eggs, may have gained the reality that is perhaps behind the appearance. Be this as it may, that was his aim: he was, in something more than the conventional sense of the words, a seeker of reality. We are always told, Alec answered, by the clergy that the world we live in is but a shape of the real world that is beyond heaven, is it that you would be telling me, sir? Well, not exactly that, Alec, but something like that. And now, to get on with the story. Eve listened to Adam, trying to puzzle out his idea of Lilith to her, all the while mad jealous she was of this ghostly playmate who used to come to him in dreams, bringing such anguish of delight with her. But she was, begob, too wise a woman to show her jealousy, and she continued to listen to Adam, who, she could see, gained great pleasure from his narrative, he being one of those who retired into the past as some do into a church. At times we'd all like to get the world behind us. And in these moments we're

all seekers of reality, Alec. I think that I'm beginning to comprehend, he answered. But women aren't like that, I'm thinking; for them life is all in the present.

CHAP. XXXVII.

IF thou wouldst learn swimming, come with me to the river, said Adam, and Eve followed Adam thither, doubtful, without enthusiasm, one might say in fear, for since yesterday her memory of the suffocating moments that she had passed under the water was more distinct. But Adam was firm with her; and supporting her with one hand, he bade her put her trust in him, and told her that in a little while she would cross the river as the animal swimming in the current yonder. Ah, now he has gone under. Drowned, said Eve. No; he has come up yonder. He has caught a fish. Eve had not yet seen any fishes, and began to be interested in them, and in the animal that had caught the fish. Trust thyself to me, Adam said; and let thy legs and hands move together.

Eve was now tired, and begged to be allowed to return to the bank, but after resting, the swimming lesson was continued, and with so much success that hope was held out to her that she would be able to cross the river in a few days, a thing which she very much wished to do, for the brown animals they had seen diving in the current brought the fish they caught in their jaws to a great flat rock, and Eve was curious to learn what became of the fishes they brought thither. She could see four little brown spots, but did not know that these were the otters' cubs; nor that otters lived upon fish. And every morning, to please Adam, she applied herself to the task of learning to swim in the pool, and, as he had foreseen, in a few days her arms and legs began to move together, and in a few days more she was on the other side of the river,

wading very quietly towards the rock on which the cubs waited.

The otters had already distributed some fishes among the cubs, and these were eagerly disputed with a strange whistling noise, each holding a fish in his forepaws, and eating his way from the head down to the tail, which he discarded. Adam and Eve could see the fish did not like being eaten, for the fish struggled, but the cubs held the fishes tightly in their paws, and continued to gnaw them. I wonder what the fishes taste like, Eve said; but neither had eaten flesh, and they were loth to take a piece from the cubs, which they could have easily done, for one of the cubs had shown such signs of friendliness that he almost offered them a piece of fish, but they were loth to accept his gift, for they were suddenly possessed of a strange premonition, a sort of instinctive knowledge it was that the larger animals were responsible for the coming into the world of the smaller animals, and these smaller animals were being fed by them upon fish. But what becomes of the fish? they asked themselves; for they that are now within the otters were swimming in the river, leaping in the sunlight a while ago, and feeling that neither could explain the mystery to the other, Adam and Eve retired to their own side of the river, perplexed and unhappy.

It was some days later, while they were bathing in the river, that they caught sight of the otters with their four cubs in the river, daddy and mummy teaching the younglings how to pursue the fishes under the water, and a great commotion they were making, the terrified fishes striving to escape their enemies in all directions, some of them darting up an inlet in which there was so little water that Adam and Eve might have picked them out with their hands. One of the cubs followed these, and presently he caught one of them, and Adam and Eve expected to see him return to the river and bring his

spoil to the rock in front of the den and eat it there, but a second thought seemed to come through his mind, and instead of returning to the river he trotted up the bank and laid the fish at their feet.

He allowed them to stroke him and he jumped round them, and then, remembering that his business was to pursue fishes, he returned to the water, and they saw no more of him till next day. Will he bring us a fish again? Eve said, and they waited at the head of a creek. He had not forgotten them and, not content with giving them one fish, he returned to the water and began to hunt the fishes. Adam and Eve thought they would see no more of him, and with the fish he had given them they returned to their dwelling under the plane-trees in the clough or dell, out of reach of the winds, and great was their surprise when they saw the otter following them with a fish in his mouth, and, as if to encourage them to eat the fish he had brought them, he laid it before them and began to eat another, one they had picked out of the shallows, and he ate with a relish which they accepted as wilful exaggeration, his purpose being to win them over to his mode of life. We shall do well to imitate the animals, Eve said, for they know more than we do, isn't that so? she asked, as she sliced a fish with a sharp stone and gave half of it to Adam. The animals must know more than we do; it could not be else, he said, they having lived upon the earth always, and as he said these words a shadow overran his face, and to disperse it she called to Othniel, the name they had given the otter, and he came trotting round her feet, and jumped upon her knees. Look at our little swimmer, she said, who didn't need any teaching. Is he not asking us to take him down to the river? We must, for his diet is fish, and we cannot catch them for him. But he has just eaten, Adam answered, for he was thinking that it might be better to wean Othniel from the river, if that were possible.

But as his diet is fish we cannot keep him from the river, Eve replied, and all three went down to the river together, Othniel passing into the stream silently as oil, and showing himself a faster swimmer than his wild brethren, and a more expert fisher.

He remained so long under water that Eve clasped her hands, certain he was drowning; a moment after they caught sight of the beloved brown-whiskered face coming towards them, a silver fish in his jaws. But though he seems to prefer us to his brethren, the river will tempt him away from us, Adam said. Thou art thinking of Lilith, Eve answered, and Adam denied that this was so, saying that he was dreaming of weapons whereby he might take the fish from the river, and, possessed by this idea, he began to sharpen flints. But the fishes were swift and sudden and eluded the spear till Othniel, as if he would save Adam from humiliation, began to drive them towards Adam. At last a frightened fish fell to Adam's spear, and over this fish Othniel started a great gambol; nor would he be gainsaid of his fun, and his pretty ways and intelligence took such a hold on their affections that they lived in dread lest they should lose him, a not unreasonable dread for he was often unable to subdue his mood to remain in the river: he would raise himself half-way out of the water, acknowledging their calling by the gesture; and by a sudden dive he sought to tell them that they need not expect him yet a while. They sought the little runway up the river where the water rushed over the boulders; he allowed them to capture him after a long frolic in the warm autumn nights and in turn they carried him to a comfortable bed of leaves in the cave. But if his mood was for deep waters he kept down the stream and they called and swam out to him in vain; to swim after an otter is vainer than to call to him; and the alarmed twain stood watching the current swirling almost silently past the walls that Iahveh had built round the

garden, widening as it flowed, looping round islands, disappearing into forests, seeming by times to lose itself in marshes and fens, but recovering itself always and threading its way into the grey autumn hills safely. But going whither? they asked themselves, forgetful of Othniel; but only for a moment: the river brought him to us, Eve said, and the river has taken him away. Iahveh is greater than the river, Adam answered, therefore we must pray that he may bid Othniel return to us. The words were on Eve's lips to reply: Iahveh cannot do that, but her feet turned into the path and they prayed at the stone altar on the hill-top that Othniel might be given back to them.

Iahveh is in no mood to listen to us to-night, Adam said: we cannot awaken him. And Eve answered: though he doesn't answer us, he may have heard us, and certain that he had heard their prayers and would answer them favourably they slept lightly, awakened often, first by sighings that seemed to come from Othniel's bed. Eve's ears were quicker than Adam's, but in answer to her Adam said: it isn't he, but the wind sighing in the trees. Again Eve awakened Adam, saying: hearken, and Adam answered: it is not he but a pebble fallen from the roof. Again they were awakened: a bird or bat, Adam said, may have come, but it has gone again. Sleep on.

A day passed and another without seeing him, and they had begun to despair of ever seeing him again, when their despair passed into joy for they saw him coming towards them thinking more of his warm bed of leaves than of them. But he had come back and they excused his heartlessness, Eve saying: he has been thrown about by the current and is well tired. This might well have been so for the river was in flood, and even an otter cannot swim against a current flowing heavily against him. Let him lie and rest himself, and while resting, Eve continued: do thou be fishing for him in the river

with the new spear and if thou canst catch fish for him we may keep him in the cave always. And Eve waited while Adam fished, but he brought no fish home with him, and Othniel, waking hungry in the evening, was taken to the river. Canst not see, Eve said, how turbulent is the water? the river is no longer the same river; the banks are overflowed and the edges thronged with birds—birds we have never seen before. These come up the river, Adam answered, when the cold weather is near.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

THE rainy season began soon after, and the river rose steadily day after day, till Adam was of a mind that it would be safer to move up the hill-side to Iahveh's altar than to remain in the clough in which they might be easily drowned; even Othniel, Adam said, great a swimmer as he was, could not contend against the waters as they are now running. Again and again he thrust his spear into the pools, but the fishes had sought to escape the force of the flood by sinking to the bottom, and to get himself a dinner, Othniel ascended the river and remained away for days over the hill-side, fishing being easier higher up the stream; and when he returned he was so tired that it seemed as if he would not be able to sleep off his weariness. They were glad of this for the storms continued despite their prayers to Iahveh; it were better they said that Othniel should fast than that he should drown; and very hungry, indeed, he was when a sweet south-wind began to blow over the garden. He caught his dinner quickly and they thought to persuade him to leave the river; but deaf to all callings, he lingered by the brink, loth to leave it. For him every breeze seemed to be laden with tidings, and with beating hearts they watched him sniffing through the reeds. He is not seeking fishes, but his kin, Eve said, and a few days after,

an otter that had doubtless scented him from afar, belike from the banks of the islands beyond the walls, met him in the current, and the otters went away together.

The river brought him to us, Eve said; the river has taken him from us; under yonder bank they will beget young. As these words were spoken it fell out that Adam's eyes should meet Eve's and they knew that the same suffering as had befallen Othniel was upon them.

Adam's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and it was with an effort that he threw out some words to Eve, hoping thereby to hide his trouble from her. He will weary of his mate, Eve, he said, and he would have continued to reassure her, but Eve's eyes were upon him. It is, perhaps, Iahveh's will to enlighten us, he said: so let us go to his altar, and pray that he may do so. We were there this morning, Eve answered. But we did not pray that we might be enlightened, he replied. Our prayers this morning were not heart-felt prayers, therefore Iahveh did not hearken to us. And so that we may be enlightened, Eve said, I will cast myself before him and bow myself three times, and repeat the prayers thou hast taught me. Let us go to the praying stone, and they went thither, and so heart-felt were Eve's utterances of the prayers he had taught her that Adam, on rising to his feet, was moved to draw her to him, and to kiss her again and again; and the emotion that their prayers to Iahveh had caused continued while they descended the hill-side; and it was on their way to the fig-trees that Adam said: see, Eve, how large the leaves are already, and in my prayers on the mount I heard Iahveh command us to weave garlands and wear them about our middles. Eve asked if the garland she had woven for her hair were not enough. Adam answered: Iahveh said about our middles. And when we go fishing, Eve persisted, may we not leave our garlands on the bank? Adam could not answer her, nor when she asked if the water

were to wash away their garlands would they be answerable for the loss of them. While climbing up the bank, she persisted, we shall be naked. No matter, the cold water will subdue us, Adam said. Eve was minded to reply: the water will grow warmer, which it did, and when in it our trouble begin, if perchance shoulder should touch shoulder.

The lord punishes us, Adam cried, for our transgressions. But we have not transgressed, Eve answered. Why should he punish us? The ways of the lord are mysterious, we may not strive to look at his heart, Adam replied, words that brought no distinct meaning to Eve's mind, but she wished to please Adam, and in accordance with his wish she did not gaze upon him as she often wished to do, but kept her eyes averted. It was her eyes that caused the rising of the flesh of which he was ashamed, for the lord had not vouchsafed the knowledge to him that he had bestowed upon Othniel. But the day will come when he will reveal the secret to us, said a voice within him, and with tears rolling down his cheeks he fell upon his knees and prayed till Eve could no longer keep her thoughts fixed on the great throne in which God sat watchful over his creatures, lest they should transgress his will. So Adam had told her, this was his belief, and it was her desire to share his belief, but a bird in the lilac distracted her thoughts from God, for she perceived the bird was building itself a little house in the bush. It came with fibre in its beak, which it wove into the moss, and the inside of the nest was plastered with clay, and when the nest was finished Eve could see the bird flattening itself out in the nest, the head only appearing above the rim, the black eyes showing through the green leaves. She told the story of the nest to Adam one day after prayer, and they went to the lilac bush and finding five eggs in it, Eve said: let us not disturb her nest, for we know not what her design may be.

The mate that had helped to build the nest, now sat upon the bough above the nest, and Eve said: he sings to pass away the time of her labour. But of the design of the birds Adam could not tell Eve; for he had never noticed the ways of birds before, and was astonished when Eve said: Adam, the bird returns with worms to the nest; come, let us look into it, for it may contain something that our eyes have never seen.

As you have already guessed, Alec, the nest contained chicks all gaping to be fed, and Adam said to Eve: this is very wonderful, and the wonder of the twain seemed to deepen when a cat came about their tree, and the parent birds came down on the pathway and challenged it to fight, shrieking at it, bidding it go hence. Their eyes are like the sparks we see in the fire, Adam said, so angry are they. How they must love their young ones, Eve answered, and a great sorrow fell upon Adam and Eve, and he to himself and she to herself said: why have we no offspring like the animals we see about us? The squirrels and the cats, and the rats and the mice, and the birds have offspring, and love their offspring; only we are alone.

And Lilith, who saw all these things in her magic well, said: my time has come to go to the garden and finish the story.

CHAP. XXXIX.

HE will be somewhere about here, she said, watching for his chance, for all that is going on in the garden he knows well; and we shall come upon each other before long for sure if I keep marching up and down these woods. A pleasant place enough for walking they are, she continued, looking round, well pleased with the woodland she was in, for though the trees were close together up above, there was plenty of room for walking between them—long, tall boles they were, as in the park over

against Westport where I met you, Alec, for the first time, jumping from boulder to boulder, and climbing up the bank, saying you were sure that the master would not mind your having a look round for ferns. That was in the weeks back, and ever since we have been telling stories as friendly as any two men in the country. It seems strange that it should be so, but so it is; and now I must be getting on with my story of my lady Lilith, who was, at the time I'm speaking of, walking under the trees outside the garden, mindful of Lucifer, whom she knew to be about somewhere, and not far off, for she could get a smell of him in the air, and walking on whither her nose led her, she said: 'tis thicker about here, a sour smell like that of a snake. But it cannot be that, and walking on farther, looking round at every step she took, she said: something is here but my eyes cannot find it, and they have searched everywhere for it. She walked on, her eyes always set on the ground, never thinking that the one she was seeking might be in a tree till she heard a voice speaking to her, saying: Lilith, raise thine eyes and thou shalt find me, and when she raised her eyes, what do you think she saw but a big green and golden serpent coiled about the branches of a cedar with one great branch stretched out from the tree itself right over the garden wall, and the thought passed through her mind that it was a convenient branch for whosoever would pass over the wall into the garden, and that perhaps that was the reason why Lucifer had changed himself into a big serpent, a serpent being able to glide and lift himself, whereas a four-footed beast, or a two-footed, for a matter of that, would be making no progress at all. Thou hast guessed rightly, he said, answering her thoughts, for Lucifer being an archangel could see into the mind, and having knowledge of all that was accomplishing on earth, said: right well thou didst answer them, meaning the angels of the Lord.

Adam and Eve are at variance, he continued, each with the other, and with Iahveh, who has refused to tell how Adam must conduct himself with Eve so as to get offspring from her. It is odd surely that he should desire offspring of that puny creature with sloping shoulders and wide hips, short legs and very dirty, Lilith rapped out, forgetful of the presence of her lord. It is true that Eve as she came to Adam from Iahveh's hands was not agreeable to his sight or smell, but a great change has come over Adam since he washed her and tressed her hair, Lucifer replied; and her legs are not shorter than thine . . . not in his eyes. Then, said Lilith, Iahveh has put a great spell upon him, blotting my image from his mind. But as soon as he sees me he will forget her; Iahveh's spell is—— My plan is better than a garden broil, Lucifer answered, and when Lilith asked him what these plans were, he said that his design was to provide Adam with the knowledge that God withheld from him. I was telling before the interruption—— Master, forgive me, Lilith cried, and Lucifer continued: Adam went to the praying stone and prayed Iahveh to tell him how he should love Eve, but he only got commandments from Iahveh: speak not of cocks and hens to me, said Iahveh; thou shalt not tread thy wife as a cock treads a hen, nor line her as a fox lines the vixen, nor cover her as the stallion covers the mare. How then? said Adam, and at this question Iahveh was angry, and with the temper flying out of both his eyes he bade Adam give his commandments to Eve, who was waiting to hear the joyful tidings as to the manner in which it is pleasing to Iahveh that mortals should obtain offspring.

Did Eve weep, master, when she heard that she was not going to bear children? No, Lucifer answered, she answered Adam in words that she knew would please him, that he would do well to observe the will of God, and to make it easier for him, she said that she loved him suffi-

ciently to live with him though he may never make a woman of her. Cunning little minx, Lilith cried, she tries to keep the man by agreeing with him in everything he says, submitting to him in all things. But why, she asked, does Iahveh refuse to allow Adam and Eve to have children? For that he is tired of the long struggle he had before he was able to throw us into hell, Lucifer replied, and yearns to live at peace among his angels, but the victor is never altogether victorious. Ever since our overthrow Adam has been a perplexity to him, and the perplexity has deepened since Adam asked him how he might procure offspring. Iahveh is afraid that the new race might take our side, and together we might succeed in giving him a fall. Iahveh, Lucifer continued, is great at present, but there is a fate over the God, and he that is now on high lives in fear of a race of unbelievers; to save himself he would forbid man to eat of the tree of knowledge. I will cross the garden wall and reveal the secret, Lilith cried. But, said Lucifer, Adam will know thee as his dream of old time. God has put a spell on him, said Lilith. Maybe he did, but I'm not sure of it, Lucifer replied. Well, what shall we do? she asked, and Lucifer said: by a stealthier method than by giving Adam the choice between thee and Eve, for remember that if he were to choose Eve we should be undone. I have thought of a better way, and for it I shall confide my shape to thee; in it thou shalt cross the garden wall, and as soon as Adam passes by the tree in which thou art hidden thou shalt lean out of the branch and say: Adam, why so downcast, why so hopeless? Give thin ear to me and learn the secret.

CHAP. XL.

BUT before going on further with the story, Alec, I think I would like to give my legs a stretch. If your

honour has a match about you I'd be glad to have a shaugh at the pipe. I'd like a smoke, too, I answered, a cigarette! A cigar will take too long; and to keep Alec in good humour I spoke of Liadin and Curithir and the throbbing love night they had passed together, and Alec promised to give me his opinion of my story when I had finished it. I like the stipulation; and, Alec, you're a good listener. A story-teller must know how to listen, he answered, for 'tis out of stories a story comes. A maxim that deserves all my congratulations, I said, and as soon as we had finished smoking, I reminded him that Lilith, after exchanging shapes with Lucifer, coiled herself into a tree within hearing distance of the flowering bank on which Adam and Eve were sitting, Adam looking into the depths of the wood disconsolate, making up a story about a little bird that might come hopping along the branches and let out the secret to him. A welcome bird he would be, by my faith, cherished by the two of us, and allowed to eat his fill of the fruit trees. But neither bird nor beast will come to our aid, and Adam continued to sit with his eyes averted from Eve, who, having pity for him, was thinking what she could say to console him, but everything that came into her head she threw out as likely to wound his feelings; till at last the silence seemed to her to be worse than anything she could say, and convinced that she could not leave him thinking any more she began talking to him about Lilith. And as soon as the name passed her lips she began saying to herself that Adam would not like to speak of Lilith, who might have left him for the reason that he did not know what the birds knew and all the beasts. But she was wrong in this, for Adam liked talking about Lilith, and Eve was glad to see his face brighten, although it was hard to keep her jealousy from gathering in her face. She talked about Lilith soothingly, saying that she believed her to be a woman tall and thin as far as one could see through

the mist that was about her always. 'Tis as if thou hadst seen her, Adam chimed in, for she would steal upon me like a mist in which I could see only a beautiful line of chin and ear; like those hills far away in the blue distance, he said. It was never in waking but in dreams that thou knewest her, Eve said. In dreams and between dreaming and waking. . . . Yet we walked in the garden together. You spoke together? Eve queried, and Adam told Eve that he remembered Lilith's voice and her silences. I do not know how she came, or whether it was out of the sky or out of the trees, but she came to me. And thou wast happy with her? I was happy and I was unhappy, Adam answered. Dost think, Adam, Eve asked sadly, that I was made to make thee unhappy? Ah, Eve, thou art blaming me now as Lilith used to do, Adam answered, and I'm thinking that all women are alike. I will try to tell thee everything, but it is hard to tell Lilith, for she is only clear to a man when he is not thinking about her at all. As soon as he tries to see or hear her she has gone. I would tell all I know lest thou shouldst think that I am keeping something back. Adam, I understand. But I haven't told thee that my love for thee is different from my love for her. I only loved her as we love the clouds; thou'rt here and kind and good, but Lilith was cruel and wicked, and when she was here she was yonder too. I could not lay hold on her, but thou I canst hold and see and hear. She was only a beam of moonlight. I read in thine eyes that a gleam from the moon is better than the shining of midday to a man. Why wouldst thou put thoughts into my head that were never there? she said. If I am satisfied, why shouldst thou be dissatisfied? I will try to be satisfied, he replied, and if anybody canst help me it is thou, with thy sweet, gentle eyes and kindly hands. Lay thy hand upon my forehead for my head is hot, I wouldst sleep a little, but before I sleep, tell me, Eve, that knowledge is not always better than ignorance

and that if we knew what the birds and beasts know and the knowledge gave us offspring our happiness would not be greater than it has been. And he gazed into her eyes as if he would read her answer therein. I love thee well enough to live with thee, though my life go by without offspring, her eyes said.

At that moment two doves came down from the branches, love being easier on the ground than at perch. If he turn his head, she said, and sees those birds, the sight of them will recall Iahveh's commandment. Would that they were not so noisy in their love, she continued to herself, the wood resounds with their kisses; if he turn his head he will deem the birds were sent to make a mock of him. Alas, said Adam, turning at the moment when the cock was treading the hen, these birds are more knowledgeable than we are. Shall we take our knowledge from them, and kiss as they kiss? And Eve, nothing loth, took Adam in her arms, and having kissed as they had seen the doves kiss, and suffered thereby many great and terrible piercings, she fell back in front of him like the hen. But Adam in this last moment remembered Iahveh's commandment, and a gloom beset his face. It may be that we shall be guilty of some great transgression, he said. Of what transgression shall we be guilty? Eve asked. Adam could not answer her, and so they sat estranged from each other until, unable to bear the estrangement any longer, Adam ran away through the trees up the steep path to the praying stone, leaving Eve absorbed in the thought that it might fall out that the end of all this would be that they would live on different sides of the garden, seeing each other in glimpses only, she said, and she asked herself if the meaning behind it all was that Iahveh created her so that he might punish Adam because he had not joined him against Lucifer.

The thought that it might be so brought tears to her eyelids and she retired into the grove and wept unre-

strainedly; and when there were no more tears for her to weep, her heart was moved to a great pity for the man who could not live enjoying things as they went by, but must needs pray. He will not come to me, said her failing heart, but she waited for him till the moonlight vanished. He will not come to me; he fears Iahveh more than he loves me. Ah! now he has fallen back, overcome with weariness, but as soon as he awakes he will pray again. If I do not leave some fruit for him he will not eat to-morrow.

CHAP. XLI.

HE has put the river between us, and we shall not see each other again but in glimpses, Eve said, as she walked absorbed in the mystery of God and man, asking herself why Iahveh should trouble himself as to their conduct on earth; for having exiled Adam, it would seem that he should be content to allow them to live according to the ways of the earth. She repeated the sacred name, and her unconcern in it reminded her of Adam's alarm when she had repeated it casually after hearing it from him for the first time.

Iahveh is always the centre of Adam's thoughts, she muttered, and the stone altar came into her thoughts, and the day he had been propelled thither by fear of Iahveh; but there had been no fear in her mind; she had prayed because she had to live with Adam, and having to live with him, she must make herself according to his likeness as far as possible. But if Iahveh comes between us always, there is no life for me; and the task of winning him from Iahveh seemed beyond her strength. But if I can discover the secret he withholds from us, his power over Adam will be lessened, she said; and she roamed the garden, continuing her search, sure at noon that love was stronger than hate, but at night, lying where they had so often lain together on the bank under

the fig-trees, she cried: Iahveh is over all, and missing Adam by her when she awoke, tears flowed over her eyelids again; she often thought that her heart would break, and it might have broken if her courage had been less than her love. My task is to save him, she said, from Iahveh, and if I am borne away and dashed against the rocks, and whirled on and on till darkness falls over me, our troubles will be ended.

It was with these very words, Alec, that she turned down the hill-side towards the river, and finding a place that seemed shallow she waded into the stream, but did not reach the middle of it, when she slipped into a deep swirl of waters against which she strove but was sucked under and came up again and sank again, all the while sore afraid that she would never look upon Adam again, which she would not have done if he had not come to her and put his hand under her chin, in that way upholding her.

Neither to that bank must I take thee, Adam said, nor to the bank on which I left thee. But there are rocks in the middle of the stream, and upon them thou and I can talk if thou wishest to talk to me. If I wish to talk to thee? she repeated, and her look smote him to the heart. Why didst thou venture into the river and it in flood? he asked, when they were seated on the rocks. I was looking for thee, she said. The fruits I left for thee by the praying stone were untouched, so it cannot be else, I said to myself, than that he has put the river between us. And was not that well done? Adam replied. Should we not be thankful to Iahveh that he set a river flowing through Eden: for it is his will that we must live asunder like a pair of trees lest we break his commandment.

Everything must be as thou wouldst wish it to be, Adam. But how are we to live apart?

We shall have to make two hoards of fruit, Adam

replied, on which we shall live through the winter when there is little fruit, or none at all, on the trees. But I know not how to make a hoard. I will teach thee. The grapes will be ripe in a month from now, and they must be gathered and dried in the sun; the figs the same. The apples too may be saved. We shall sit on these stones, for this is the meering; and thou'lt learn from me how these things may be done and to live without me. Thou'lt be lonely, no doubt, without me; the days will seem long and the nights too; but there is no other way. It shall be as thou sayest, she answered, and her arms went about him: it shall be as thou sayest. But do not make it harder for me, Adam said, and to disguise his great love of her he plunged into the pool. But after a little while he returned to her. We must try and bear our lives and live them as Iahveh seems to have willed that we should live them. Thou shalt live on the right bank of the river and I on the left bank, but we shall meet here on these rocks, he said, and I will instruct thee about the drying of fruits and thou canst make thyself comfortable in the hut that we built last autumn together. I shall build another hut on my side. But tell me, she said, how I may reach my bank. The current frightens me. I will swim with thee through the places where the river is deep and strong, and when thou'rt on the gravelly bank I will return unto the river, and remain on my side of it till thou comest out on to those rocks, which thou wilt do when thou hast need of me.

It would have been better, Eve thought, as she returned to the grove in which they had spent so many happy hours, if he had left me to drown in that pool, for it would seem that man is made to make woman unhappy. But must we, she asked herself, be always unhappy? It cannot be that there is no way out of this trouble. It cannot be that we who are more intelligent than the birds and beasts should not find it, and she went about

the garden watching all these, and when she was not watching the beasts and birds, she gathered such fruits as were ripe, and stored them as he had bidden her to do, and took pleasure in so doing, for she was doing his will. But the nights were long, and the calm dawns miserable to behold. At last remembrance came out of misery: he had told her that he would show her how the fruit should be stored!

Adam! Adam! she cried. And she had not to speak his name a third time before she saw his head above the water, and he rushing through it like a fish, so eager was he to be with her.

As soon as he had climbed up beside her and shaken the water from his hair and beard they began to talk of the fruit she had gathered and the roof of the house in which she lived. At last he said: thou hast wandered much in the garden. Yes; and have seen much, she answered him; birds and squirrels and mice and rats, cockchafers, beetles and the ordinary fly. But we are not as these and have been commanded to abstain from imitating them in their swyvings, he said. Cats, she said, come over the wall screaming after each other. But we are commanded, he said, by the God, to abstain till he reveals the secret of love—— And of offspring, she interjected. She had seen from a gap in the walls a herd of great animals with long hairy tails on their rumps and on their necks a yard of hair.

Among these was one taller, handsomer, more powerful than the others, a sort of master among them, and one day she said he came whinnying, his ears cocked to meet a female. I judged her to be one, she being smaller, smoother, daintier than he was, like unto him as I am to thee, Adam. A strange match they made as they stood nosing each other, she shy, diffident, he eager and valiant, yet gentle with her always, though she was rough and angry with him, squealing betimes and kicking at him

till at last, like one that accepts another's will, he drew away from her, regretfully, I thought, and then like one that had forgotten he began to graze a bit away. But he was only pretending to have forgotten her, for when she came forward, trying to entice him back to her, I could see that he was watching her, and every moment I expected him to leave off feeding, but it was a long time before she could get him to notice her. At last she succeeded in enticing him from his feed; and this time he was bolder with her, beginning at once to bite her in the chest, in play, of course; licking her sides and biting her again. She seemed to like his play; his cosening seemed to her taste; but when he came to her haunches she squealed and kicked, without striking him, however, misdirecting her kicks perhaps of set purpose. And this play was continued for several days, she always inviting his intentions and never resenting them till he tried to throw his fore-leg over her. The days went by, ripening her, and when her time was come he rose himself up and, gripping her by the neck, he went in unto her, hugging her the while. And then? said Adam. Then, Eve answered, he dropped exhausted on his hooves, and they sniffed at each other once or twice before beginning to graze, keeping together apart from the herd.

But of what concern to us are the ways of beasts? Adam said, and hast thou forgotten Iahveh's commandments? It may be, she answered, that the God put a wall round the garden, but when thou'rt not by me I forget these things. I knew of God only through thee, and am different from thee inasmuch as thou wast an angel once in heaven, but I'm a rib taken from thy side else a handful of dust. For thou knowest not exactly how God created me, only that when thine eyes opened I was sleeping by thee. Wouldst thou, Eve, have me return to the other bank and live with thee like a beast? It shall be as thou dost wish it, Adam. And it being my

wish always that thou shouldst be happy, or at least as little unhappy as may be, I would have thee go to him with no desire in thy heart but obedience to his will only. Adam, leave me, Eve cried, but let me come to-morrow to these rocks, for though they are hard to sit upon it is better to see thee here than not to see thee at all.

Thou mayest come here if thou wilt strive to make Iahveh's will thine and—— What else, Adam, is upon thy mind to tell me? Only this, Eve, that having looked over the wall, a thing that Iahveh hath forbidden, it may fall out that in thy wanderings a voice may speak to thee out of a tree. Hast heard a voice, Adam, speaking out of yon trees? And Adam answered that it had seemed to him that he had heard a voice speaking out of a tree, saying he had but to listen to hear the secret. And thou didst not listen? Eve said. Iahveh forbid, he answered. And then thou fleddest, she said, to the thither side, leaving the praying stone without offering. I had hoped to find another, he answered, and Eve, guessing that the desire of prayer was again upon him, said: why not cross the river for prayer? The evening skies are calm, and thy prayer will go up to Iahveh's nostrils and refresh him.

With words like these I'm telling she beguiled him over to her side of the river, and as soon as she saw him going up the hill-side with the fruits she had given him for offering her eyes turned to the trees out of which the voice had spoken to him. The voice that he heard can only be Lilith's, she said, who would not have Adam withhold himself from me any longer, he having by now descended altogether out of angel kind into man kind. So she went to the tree that Adam had pointed out to her as the one out of which he had heard the voice speak: whosoever is in this tree, let her or him tell me how I may be Adam's wife, and get offspring like the birds and

the beasts, she cried, and as soon as the snake heard Eve, she stretched herself along the bough, and dropping a yard or two of herself said: I am Lilith, who was Adam's first wife, but in his mind rather than in his body. Lean thy ear closer, lest Iahveh should hear and send angels to hunt me into hell again. Eve gave her ear, and, having learnt from Lilith the way of man with a woman, she waited for Adam to return from the altar, all the while turning over in her mind the delightful modes of love she had learnt from Lilith.

Adam came to her full of God and unsuspicious, saying that after prayer he had bethought himself of the house they had lived in last winter, and how it might be repaired. If the wind comes under the door thou'lt come to the river and cry aloud for me, and it will not be long before I'm swimming to thee, though the floods be great in winter-time. The words came to Eve's lips to thank him, but she kept them back, and they walked to the house in silence. Thou'lt be building a house, she said, for thyself as good as this one, one that will be rain and wind tight, and he answered that it was as likely as not he would be building something, but he did not mind the wind and rain, he was pretty tough, he said. But thou'lt find the cold weather hard to bear, and his eyes going round the store of fruit she had laid in, he said: thou hast not gotten enough of this fruit to feed thee through the winter, more should be gathered; and they went through the garden shaking the boughs and gathering the fruit till the kindling of the evening star.

It was then in the dusk that Adam showed Eve how she should store the fruit, and when it was laid by for the winter the perplexed twain wandered from the house to the bank under the fig-tree, and with Adam by her side Eve was moved to tell him she had discovered the secret, but she withheld it from him, afraid to speak to

him, so easily was he led away by words; but in spite of her silence, perhaps because of it, he began to speak once more of Iahveh's providence and his design, saying: Eve, if it be within his design that we beget children the secret how we shall beget them will not be withheld from us. Adam, she answered, I cannot talk any more, and fell back amid the mosses and he over her. Thou'rt not upon my back for that is forbidden, yet we are mingled; belly to belly we lie, and guiding him a little she said: therein is the secret, art pleased with it? His ardour was her answer, and his joy was so great that he could not get a word past his teeth, and when relief came they lay side by side, enchanted lovers, listening to the breeze that raised the leaves of the fig-tree, letting the moonlight through.

May we not, he asked, discover the secret again? Will the delight be as great? And she answered: we shall know that presently, and her arms went about him; and their delight was greater than before, and when they returned to rediscover the secret for a third time, Eve screamed and she knew not whether is was from pain or pleasure, and her scream was so heartrending that Adam was frightened, and thinking he had killed his wife he sat up on the bank of delight and began to pray. But seeing he had done her no harm at all, he said: it is against God I have sinned, and my sin might never have been known if Eve hadn't yelled that terrible, awful yell, that may have awakened Iahveh dozing in his golden chair, and that misfortune has surely befallen us, he will be sending his angels with flaming swords to sever off our heads. You see, Adam was well learned in the ways of God. But Lucifer, too, had had a long experience of heaven; and while Michael, Gabriel and Raphael were girding on their flaming swords he said: we must hide Adam and Eve from God's angels, who will destroy them

and the seed of the new race that will bring about Iahveh's downfall in the years to come. Lilith answered: master, as thou wilt.

CHAP. XLII.

BEFORE the ring of day Adam and Eve were hidden beyond the walls of the garden in deep caves, where they could not be discovered by the angels in search of them, for when the angels came into one cave, Adam and Eve found outlets into other caves, and as every cave had two they went hither and thither, escaping the angels always, suffering hunger and thirst, for outside of the garden was all wilderness; only a few berries and roots could they find, but fruits nowhere. So it came to pass that in their flight from the pursuing angels they were several days without even a bilberry or a handful of cress wherewith to quench their longing: we can go no farther, Eve, the angels must take us here, Adam said. And Eve answered: there is a way out of our trouble; and he asked her: which way is that? and Eve replied: the way that we came into it. And Adam said: I understand thee not, and Eve said: was it not I that brought all this trouble upon thee? Was it not I that loved God not at all and would not live according to his commands? But, Eve, thou camest with me to the altar and prayed, and we made offerings of fruit to Iahveh. But my heart was not in prayer, Adam, and the offerings to Iahveh always seemed to me a waste. Iahveh had no place in my heart nor in my thoughts, and it was to divide thee from Iahveh that I listened to Lilith; for in my foolishness I said: if I bring the secret to Adam he will forget Iahveh. But Iahveh is all-powerful and we are overwhelmed with hunger and thirst. I would give thee back to Iahveh. . . . How can I be given back to Iahveh? Adam asked, and Eve answered: my thoughts are not wandering, Adam, but I would undo the wrong I have done, and the undoing can

be accomplished in that river if we can reach it. In the pool from which thou didst save me I will drown, and thereby Iahveh's fallen angel will be restored to grace; he will be put back into the garden; he will be happy again amid flowers and fruits, and the pleasant rays that fall upon the altar at noon will draw him unto prayer. Prayers are dearer to thee, Adam, than I ever could be. Lead me to the river, Adam, let one be happy if both may not be. I am nothing, I was made out of one of thy ribs or out of a handful of mould by Iahveh for thy companionship. I am nothing, but thou wast once God's angel. God is all-powerful. Let my death give thee back to Iahveh. But, Eve, there is no happiness for me on this earth except with thee, and hast no thought of the child in the womb? And hast thou no love for him? I have love for my child, but my love of thee, Adam, is greater, and my child must die with me that the world be redeemed from sin. So it would seem. Iahveh will accept my death as an atonement. Lead me to the river, Adam.

As we have lived so we must die, Adam replied; and the twain sat side by side against the rocks, and folded their arms and waited for the power of Iahveh to fall upon them. And they did not know how long they had waited, for time seemed at a standstill, but in the midst of their stupor they were awakened by a voice, and Adam said to Eve: that is no angel's voice, and Eve said: whosoever's voice it be concerns us not, for the end is nigh. Thy will be done, Adam, if it be that thou shouldst die with me unrepentant. But the voice brought them life in the shape of a lamb, one of the mountain sheep that the angels had frightened with their flaming swords. He had become lost in the caves, or maybe had been sent thither, Alec, by Lucifer himself, who looked to the race of men to bring about the overthrow of Iahveh. Whosoever sent the lamb, it was the lamb's blood that saved the twain in the cave and assured the victory,

accomplishing slowly, but always accomplishing from that day to ours, Alec.

Since there be no fruit in the wilderness, we must kill and eat always, Adam said, and from henceforth his days were spent fashioning weapons, and Eve in weaving nets, wherewith they were able to encompass beasts and birds. So did the twain live, flying from the angels of the Lord from cave to cave, Eve bringing forth Cain in the first year of banishment, and Abel in the second. And when daughters were born to them, Cain took one sister to lie with him; she conceived and bore Enoch, with whom Cain was so well pleased that he named the city he built after his son. After Enoch came Irad, and Irad begat Mehujael; and Mehujael begat Methusael; and Methusael begat Lamech; and Lamech took unto him two wives, the name of one was Adah and the name of the other was Zillah, and Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those that dwelt in tents, and his brother's name was Jubal, and he was the father of harp and organ players; and Jubal bore Tubal-cain, the craftsman in brass and iron, and the sister of Tubal-cain was Maamah.

Very soon the earth was covered with men, and the angels looked down from heaven, and seeing that the daughters of men were fair, they lusted after them, and the children that were born of woman and angel kind were giants, and God said: the children of these giants will join with Satan's legions and rise up against me. My power will be overthrown! So he called together his cohorts, and gave the command unto Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, and these going forth drove against the celestial lechers, surrounded, overpowered and bound them, and threw them into the centre of the earth for time everlasting. And Iahveh said unto his archangels: you have done well, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, you have redeemed my heaven of lewd angels; but, he said, the giants still abound, and ye are tired of long wars, so we

will open the sources of the sea and drown the world, and make an end of man and his evil deeds. And the angels replied: thy will be done, Lord, on earth as it is in heaven, and the sources of the seas were opened.

But one man built an ark and it was with his progeny that the earth was again replenished. God said, perhaps fire will succeed better than water, and he showered brimstone and fire all over the world, and burned out every man but one, Lot, and his daughters, and with these the world was again replenished, the first daughter saying to the younger: our father is old, there's not a man to come in unto us after the manner of all the world. Come, let us make our father drink wine and we will lie with him that we may preserve the seed of our father. And what the older had done the younger did the next night. And seeing how all his designs had failed him, and that the race of man was indestructible, Iahveh bowed his head, saying: my years are numbered. I am dying and shall die, for the years are coming when men will no longer believe in God.

CHAP. XLIII.

NOW, Alec, that is the end of the story that I composed last week, and you being the shanachie of old Connaught I should like to hear my story criticised by you, to hear it blamed or praised, if there be anything in it that seems worthy to you of praise or blame. Well, your honour, there are fine things in your story, but I'm sure Father Kennedy wouldn't have any truck with any story about Adam and Eve that isn't in the Bible. The Talmud, I interjected. But forget Father Tom and tell me what you think of my story. A wonderful story, your honour, for if I rightly understand you, it isn't more than a week old; the best I've ever heard at that age, and when it has been seven or eight years in your head it will be as

good as ten-year-old John Jamieson. That's how it is with mine. At first they are poisonous stuff but year by year they mellow, and after sleeping and dreaming in my head, like the whisky in the wood, they come out good, sociable and kind, and them that listen become as good and kind and gentle as the whisky itself.

You think that my story will improve on keeping? I do, your honour. I think you're right, I felt that I was relating only a rough and ready version. As I told you, my stories are eye stories, yours are ear stories. But I would not have your honour thinking that I was making little of your story; it's a grand story as you have told it: Adam praying on his two knees in front of Eve: I have killed her, I have killed her, she is dead and all; all is done and damn the deed! But of course he soon saw that he had not done her a bit of harm, and that she was ready for some more of the same trouble.

Faith, I give in to your honour; the shanachie of London has pounded the shanachie of Westport. There are grand things in it, the great squeal of a screech that Eve let off, and himself frightened out of his very life, and every cat of the cats, and every creature of the creatures, in the same fright—a grand hullabaloo—a squeal, a whoop and a whistle, and then all silent again.

Faith and troth, Alec, it's yourself that should have been the story-teller, for you have put a polish on Eve's love cry that raises a black envy of you up into my heart, and I wouldn't be surprised if Synge himself were stirring in his grave at this very moment.

CHAP. XLVI.

A FEW days after the relation of the Garden of Eden I caught sight of Alec under the walls of the old mill, looking out for a safe place to cross the river. There's not much water in the river, I said to myself; he can

step from boulder to boulder, and my heart quickened a little at the thought of the new story he was coming to tell me. Is it a long one? I asked, as soon as he had scrambled up the high bank. His puzzled face was sufficient answer; he had not come to tell me a story, but to bid me good-bye, having heard in the town that I was leaving Westport at the end of the week.

But maybe I'm interfering with your honour in coming to you now; you may be composing another story, and on asking him why he thought that he said there was no place for the unravelling of stories like a seat by a brawling brook; like water they come foaming and swirling by, as if they couldn't get on fast enough. Yes, Alec, it's like that by a brook, sometimes. But I'm sorry you haven't come to tell me a story. Are you sure you haven't one about you? Well, no, your honour, it's just the other way round; I thought I'd come to you for another one; I'd like to hear a story from you—one of them stories the publishers do be ferreting in their pockets for the notes and the gold to pay you for. I'd like to hear one of them as it comes out of your head. I think you must take me for a keg, Alec, always on tap as soon as the spigot has been driven in. Isn't every shanachie like that? he answered, and don't the country people be asking me for stories till the last sod of turf has melted away into ashes? A real story, Alec, without Iahveh or fairies, not even a priest in it nor devils nor serpents, an English or an Irish story, which, Alec? I wouldn't be sticking you to any one country, Alec answered, but I think I'd be feeling more at home listening to an Irish story than to an English one. And sure an Irishman the like of yourself wouldn't be put to the pin of his collar to tell an Irish story, for there must be many's the one going the rounds inside your head, and you this many a year away from us. True enough, I answered, so many years that it ill becomes me to be telling an Irish story

to the shanachie of Connaught. Didn't you come out of Connaught yourself? he asked, and from the heart of it, from the county of Mayo as I did myself? Faith, it will be the Ballinrobe cock against the Westport rooster. I don't know that I can think of an Irish story, I said, unless—— Unless what, your honour? Unless I start out of an old memory. The best stories babble themselves out of them old memories, he said. But now I come to think of it, Alec, the story I'd be telling you is Irish only because it all happened in Morrison's Hotel. Isn't that the hotel Parnell used to be staying in? Alec interjected. It is so, I answered; and the story has been muttering in me ever since; but I'm no way sure that it won't tangle on me in the telling. You'll bear in mind, Alec, that this is the first telling. You said, yourself that stories ripen in the mouth. They do, faith, he answered. The tongue's the fellow to put a good skin on a story. In the third or fourth telling the pink do be showing out upon it, and ever afterwards it do be as juicy in the mouth as a blackberry in Samhain.

CHAP. XLV.

WHEN we went up to Dublin in the sixties, Alec, we always put up at Morrison's Hotel, a big family hotel at the corner of Dawson Street, one that was well patronised by the gentry from all over Ireland, and fine big bills they would be running up in it, my father paying his every six months when he was able, which wasn't very often, for what with racing stables and elections following one after the other, Moore Hall wasn't what you'd call overflowing with money. Now that I come to think of it, I can see Morrison's as clearly almost as I do Moore Hall: the front door opening into a short passage, with some half-dozen steps leading up into the house. A dark entrance, so it was, the glass doors of the coffee-room show-

ing through the dimness, and in front of the visitor a big staircase running up to the second landing. I don't think the grand staircase went any higher; I think I can see it looping somehow about the head of the staircase, and I'm sure I'm right; it was always being drummed into me that I mustn't climb onto the banisters, a thing I was wishing to do, but was always afraid to get astride of them, so deep was it down to the ground floor. I think I can see the long passage leading from the stair-head so far into the house that I didn't dare to follow it for fear of losing my way. I think there was a little staircase at the end of it, and I used to wonder whither it went. A very big building was Morrison's Hotel, with passages running hither and thither and little flights of steps in all kinds of odd corners. So it was on the second floor and on the third—— But we needn't be thinking what was above the second floor, for we were always on the second in a big sitting-room that overlooked College Green. I can remember the pair of windows, their lace curtains, and their repp curtains, better than the passages, and better than the windows I can remember myself looking through the pane interested in the coal carts going by; the bell hitched on to the horse's collar jangling all the way down the street; the coalman himself sitting, his legs hanging over the shafts, driving from the wrong side and looking up at the windows to see if he could spy out an order. Fine horses were in these coal carts, stepping out as well as those in our own carriage. I'm telling you these things for the pleasure of looking back and nothing else. I can see the sitting-room and myself as plainly as I can see the mountains beyond, in some ways plainer; and the waiter that used to attend on us, I can see him, though not as plainly as I see you, Alec; but I'm more knowledgeable of him, if you'd be understanding me rightly; and to this day I can recall the awful frights he gave me when he came behind me awaking me from my dream

of a coalman's life; what he said is forgotten, but his squeaky voice remains in my ears. He seemed to be always laughing at me, showing long yellow teeth, and I used to be afraid to open the sitting-room door, for I'd be sure to find him waiting on the landing, his napkin thrown over his right shoulder. I think I was afraid he'd pick me up and kiss me. As the whole of my story is about him, perhaps I'd better describe him more fully, and to do that I will tell you that he was a tall, scraggy fellow, with big hips sticking out and a long thin throat. It was his throat that frightened me as much as anything about him, unless it was his nose, which was a great high one, or his melancholy eyes, which were pale blue and very small, deep in the head. He was old, but how old I cannot say, for everybody except children seems old to children. He seemed the ugliest thing I'd ever seen out of a fairy-book, and I'd beg not to be left alone in the sitting-room; and I'm sure I often asked my father and mother to take another set of rooms, which they never did, for they liked Albert Nobbs; and the guests liked him, and the proprietress liked him, as well she might, for he was the most dependable servant in the hotel: no running round to public-houses and coming back with the smell of whisky and tobacco upon him; no rank pipe in his pocket, and of all no playing the fool with the maid-servants. Nobody had even been heard to say he had seen Albert out with one of them. A queer hobgoblin sort of fellow that they mightn't have cared to be seen with, but all the same it seemed to them funny that he should never propose to walk out with one of them. I've heard the hall porter say it was hard to understand a man living without taking pleasure in something outside of his work. Holidays he never asked for, and when Mrs. Baker pressed him to go to the salt water for a week he'd try to rake up an excuse for not going away, asking if it wasn't true that the Blakes, the Joyces and the Ruttledges were com-

ing up to town, saying that he didn't like to be away, so used they were to him and he to them. A strange life his was, and mysterious, though every hour of it was before them, saving the hours he was asleep, which wasn't many, for he was no great sleeper. From the time he got up in the morning till he went to bed at night he was before their eyes, running up and down the staircase, as if an order were as good as a half-crown tip to him; always good-humoured, and making amends for his lack of interest in other people by his willingness to oblige. No one had ever heard him object to doing anything he was asked to do or even to put forward an excuse for not being able to do it. In fact his willingness to oblige was so notorious in the hotel that Mrs. Baker (the proprietress of Morrison's Hotel at the time) could hardly believe she was listening to him when he began to stumble from one excuse to another for not sharing his bed with Hubert Page, and this after she had told him that his bed was Page's only chance of getting a stretch that night. All the other waiters were married men and went home to their wives. You see, Alec, it was Punchestown week, and beds are as scarce in Dublin that week as diamonds are on the slopes of Croagh Patrick. But you haven't told us yet who Page was, Alec interjected, and I thought reprovingly. I'm just coming to him, I answered: Hubert Page was a house-painter, well known and well liked by Mrs. Baker. He came over every season, and was always welcome at Morrison's Hotel, and so pleasant were his manners that one forgot the smell of his paint. It is hardly saying too much to say that when Hubert Page had finished his job everybody in the hotel, men and women alike, missed the pleasant sight of this young man going to and fro in his suit of hollands, the long coat buttoned loosely to his figure with large bone buttons, going to and fro about his work, up and down the passages with a sort of lolling idle gait that attracted

and pleased the eye—a young man that would seem preferable to most if a man had to choose a bed-fellow, yet seemingly the very one that Albert Nobbs couldn't abide lying down with, a dislike that Mrs. Baker could understand so little that she stood staring at her confused and embarrassed waiter, who was still seeking excuses for his dislike to share his bed with Hubert Page. I suppose you fully understand, she said, that Page is leaving for Belfast by the morning train, and has come over here to ask us for a bed, there not being one at the hotel in which he is working? Albert answered that he understood well enough, but was thinking—— He began again to fumble with words. Now what are you trying to say? Mrs. Baker asked, and rather sharply; my bed is full of lumps, Albert answered. Your mattress full of lumps! the proprietress rapped out; why, your mattress was repicked and buttoned six months ago, and came back as good as any mattress in the hotel; what kind of story are you telling me? So it was, ma'am, so it was, Albert mumbled, and it was some time before he got out his next excuse; he was a very light sleeper and had never slept with anybody before and was sure he wouldn't close his eyes; not that that would matter much, but his sleeplessness might keep Mr. Page awake. Mr. Page would get a better stretch on one of the sofas in the coffee-room than in his bed, I'm thinking, Mrs. Baker. A better stretch on the sofa in the coffee-room? Mrs. Baker repeated angrily. I don't understand you, not a little bit, and she stood staring at the two men, so dissimilar. But, ma'am, I wouldn't be putting Mr. Nobbs to the inconvenience of my company, the house-painter began. The night is a fine one, I'll keep myself warm with a sharp walk, and the train starts early. You'll do nothing of the kind, Page, she answered; and seeing that Mrs. Baker was now very angry Albert thought it time to give in, and without more ado he began to assure them

both that he'd be glad of Mr. Page's company in his bed. I should think so, indeed, interjected Mrs. Baker. But, Albert continued, I'm a light sleeper. We've had enough of that, Albert. If Mr. Page is pleased to share my bed, Albert continued, I shall be very glad. If Mr. Nobbs doesn't like my company I should—— Don't say another word, Albert whispered, you'll only set her against me. Come upstairs at once. It'll be all right. Come along.

Good-night, ma'am, and I hope—— No inconvenience whatever, Page, Mrs. Baker answered. This way, Mr. Page, Albert cried; and as soon as they were in the room Albert said: I hope you aren't going to cut up rough at anything I've said; it isn't at all as Mrs. Baker put it. I'm glad enough of your company, but you see, as I've never slept with anybody in my life it may be that I shall be tossing about all night keeping you awake. Well, if it's to be like that, Page answered, I might as well have a doze on the chair until it's time to go, and not trouble you at all. Troubling me you won't be, but I might be troubling you. Enough has been said, we must lie down together whether we like it or whether we don't, for if Mrs. Baker heard that we hadn't been in the same bed together all the fault would lie with me. I'd be sent out of the hotel in double quick time. But can she know? Page cried. It's been settled one way, so let us make no more fuss about it.

Albert began to undo his white necktie, saying he would try to lie quiet; and Page started pulling off his clothes, thinking he'd be well pleased to be out of the job of lying down with Albert. But he was so dog-tired that he couldn't think any more about whom he was to sleep with, only of the long days of twelve and thirteen hours he had been doing, with a walk to and from his work. Only sleep mattered to him, and Albert saw him tumble into bed in the long shirt that he wore under his clothes, and lay himself down next to the wall. It would

be better for him to lie on the outside, Albert said to himself, but he didn't like to say anything lest Page might get out of the bed in a fit of ill-humour; but Page, as I've said, was too tired to trouble himself which side of the bed he was to doss on. A moment after he was asleep: and Albert stood listening, his loosened tie dangling, till the heavy breathing from the bed told him that Page was sound asleep. To make full sure he approached the bed stealthily, and overlooking Page, said: poor fellow, I'm glad he's in my bed for he'll get a good sleep there, and he wants it, and considering that things had fallen out better than he hoped for, he began to undress.

CHAP. XLVI.

HE must have fallen asleep at once, and soundly, for he awoke out of nothingness. Flea, he muttered, and a strong one too. It must have come from the house-painter alongside of me. A flea will leave anyone to come to me, and turning round in bed he remembered the look of dismay that had appeared on the housemaids' faces yesterday on his telling them that no man would ever love their hides as much as a flea loved his, which was so true that he couldn't understand how it was that the same flea had taken so long to find him out. Fleas must be as partial to him, he said, as they are to me. There it is again, trying to make up for lost time, and out went Albert's leg. I'm afraid I've awakened him, Albert said, but Hubert only turned over in the bed to sleep more soundly. It's a mercy indeed that he is so tired, Albert said, for if he wasn't very tired that last jump I gave would have awakened him.

A moment after Albert was nipped again by another flea or by the same one, he couldn't tell; he thought it must be a second one, so vigorous was the bite: and he was hard put to it to keep his nails off the spots. It

will only make it worse if I scratch, he said, and he strove to lie quiet. But the torment was too great. I've got to get up, he said, and raising himself up quiet, he listened. The striking of a match won't awaken him out of that sleep, and remembering where he had put the match-box, his hand was on it at once. The match flared up; he lighted the candle and stood a while overlooking his bed-fellow: I'm safe, he said, and set himself to the task of catching the flea. There it is on the tail of my shirt, hardly able to move with all the blood he's taken from me. Now for the soap, and as he was about to dab it on the blood-filled insect the painter awoke with a great yawn, and turning round, he said: Lord a-massy! what is the meaning of this? why, you're a woman! If Albert had had the presence of mind to drop his shirt over his shoulders and to answer: you're dreaming, my man, Page might have turned over and fallen asleep and in the morning forgotten all about it, or thought he had been dreaming. But Albert hadn't a word in her chops. At last she began to blub. You won't tell on me, and ruin a poor man, will you, Mr. Page? that is all I ask of you, and on my knees I beg it. Get up from your knees, my good woman, said Hubert. My good woman! Albert repeated, for she had been about so long a man that she only remembered occasionally that she was a woman. My good woman, he repeated, get up from your knees and tell me how long you have been playing this part. Ever since I was a girl, Albert answered. You won't tell upon me, will you, Mr. Page, and prevent a poor woman from getting her living? Not likely, I've no thought of telling on you, but I'd like to hear how it all came about. How I went out as a youth to get my living? Yes, tell me the story, Hubert answered, for though I was very sleepy just now, the sleep has left my eyes and I'd like to hear it. But before you begin tell me what you were doing with your shirt off. A flea, Albert answered. I suffer

terribly from fleas, and you must have brought some in with you, Mr. Page. I shall be covered with blotches in the morning. I'm sorry for that, Hubert said, but tell me how long ago it was that you became a man. Before you came to Dublin, of course. Oh yes, long before. It is very cold, she said, and shuddering dropped her shirt over her shoulders and pulled on her trousers.

CHAP. XLVII.

IT was in London, soon after the death of my old nurse, she began. You know I'm not Irish, Mr. Page. My parents may have been for all I know. The only one who knew who they were was my old nurse and she never told me. Never told you! interjected Hubert. No, she never told me, though I often asked her, saying no good could come of holding it back from me. She might have told me before she died but she died suddenly. Died suddenly, Hubert repeated, without telling you who you were! You'd better begin at the beginning.

I don't know how I'm to do that, for the story seems to me without a beginning; anyway I don't know the beginning. I was a bastard and no one but my old nurse, who brought me up, knew who I was; she said she'd tell me some day and she hinted more than once that my people were grand folk and I know she had a big allowance from them for my education. Whoever they were a hundred a year was paid to her for my keep and education, and all went well with us so long as my parents lived, but when they died, the allowance was no longer paid, and my nurse and myself had to go out to work. It was all very sudden: one day the reverend mother (I got my education at a convent school) told me that Mrs. Nobbs, my old nurse, had sent for me, and the first news I had on coming home was that my parents were dead and that we'd have to get our own living henceforth. Nor

was there time for picking and choosing. We hadn't what would keep us till the end of the month in the house, so out we had to go in search of work; and the first job that came our way was looking after chambers in the Temple. We had three gentlemen to look after, so there was eighteen shillings a week between my old nurse and myself; the omnibus fares had to come out of these wages, and to save sixpence a day we went to live in Temple Lane. My old nurse didn't mind the lane; she had been a working woman all her life, but with me it was different, and the change was so great from the convent that I often thought I would sooner die than continue to live amid rough people. There was nothing wrong with them, they were honest enough, but they were poor, and when one is very poor one lives like the animals, indecently, and life without decency is hardly bearable, so I thought. I've been through a great deal since in different hotels, and have become used to hard work, but even now I can't think of Temple Lane without goose flesh, and when Mrs. Nobbs' brother lost his berth (he'd been a bandmaster, a bugler, or something to do with music in the country), my old nurse was obliged to give him sixpence a day, and the drop from eighteen shillings to fourteen and sixpence is a big one. My old nurse worried about the food, but it was the rough men that I worried about; the bandsman wouldn't leave me alone, and many's the time I've waited until the staircase was clear, afraid that if I met him or another I'd be caught hold of and pulled about. I was different then from what I am now and might have been tempted if one of them had been less rough than the rest, and if I hadn't known I was a bastard; it was that, I think, that kept me straight more than anything else, for I had just begun to feel what a great misfortune it is for a poor girl to find herself in the family way; no greater misfortune can befall anyone in this world, but it would have been worse in my case,

for I should have known that I was only bringing another bastard into the world.

I escaped being seduced in the lane, and in the chambers the barristers had their own mistresses, pleasant and considerate men they all were—pleasant to work for; and it wasn't until four o'clock came and our work was over for the day that my heart sank, for after four o'clock till we went to bed at night there was nothing for us to do but to listen to drunken women; I don't know which was the more revolting, the laughter or the curses.

One of the barristers we worked for was Mr. Congreve; he had chambers in Temple Gardens overlooking the river, and it was a pleasure to us to keep his pretty things clean, never breaking one of them; it was a pleasure for my old nurse as well as myself, for myself more than her, for though I wasn't very sure of myself at the time, looking back now I can see that I must have loved Mr. Congreve very dearly; and it couldn't be else, for I had come out of a convent of nuns where I had been given a good education, where all was good, quiet, refined and gentle, and Mr. Congreve seemed in many ways to remind me of the convent: for he never missed Church, as rare for him to miss a service as for parson. There was plenty of books in his chambers and he'd lend them to me, and talk to me when I took in his breakfast over his newspaper, and ask me about the convent and what the nuns were like, and I'd stand in front of him, my eyes fixed on him, not feeling the time going by. I can see him now as plainly as if he were before me—very thin and elegant, with long white hands and beautifully dressed. Even in the old clothes that he wore of a morning there wasn't much fault to find; he wore old clothes more elegantly than any man in the Temple wore his new clothes. I used to know all his suits, as well I might, for it was my job to look after them, to brush them; and I used to spend a great deal more time

than was needed taking out spots with benzine, arranging his neckties—he had fifty or sixty, all kinds—and seven or eight great coats. A real toff, my word he was that, but not one of those haughty ones too proud to give one a nod. He always smiled and nodded if we met under the clock, he on his way to the library and I returning to Temple Lane. I used to look after him, saying: he's got on the striped trousers and the embroidered waistcoat. Mr. Congreve was a compensation for Temple Lane; he had promised to take me into his private service and I was counting the days when I should leave Temple Lane, when one day I said to myself: why, here's a letter from a woman. You see, Mr. Congreve wasn't like the other young men in the Temple; I never found a hairpin in his bed, and if I had I shouldn't have thought as much of him as I did. Nice is in France, I said, and thought no more about the matter until another letter arrived from Nice. Now what can she be writing to him about? I asked, and thought no more about it till the third letter arrived. Yesterday is already more than half forgotten, but the morning I took in that last letter is always before me. And it was a few mornings afterwards that a box of flowers came for him. A parcel for you, sir, I said. He roused himself up in bed. For me? he cried, putting out his hand, and the moment he saw the writing, he said: put the flowers in water. He knows all about it, I said to myself, and so overcome was I as I picked them up out of the box that I was seized with a sudden faintness, and my old nurse said: what is the matter with thee? She never guessed, and I couldn't have told her if I had wished to, for at the time it was no more than a feeling that so far as I was concerned all was over. Of course I never thought that Mr. Congreve would look at me, and I don't know that I wanted him to, but I didn't want another woman about the place, and I seemed to know from that moment what was going to

happen. She isn't far away now, in the train maybe, I said, as I went about my work, and these rooms will be mine no longer. Of course they never were mine, but you know what I mean.

A week later he said to me: there's a lady coming to luncheon here, and I remember the piercing that the words caused me; I can feel them here still, and Albert put her hand to her heart. Well, I had to serve the luncheon working round the table and they not minding me at all, but sitting looking at each other lost in a sense of delight: the luncheon was forgotten; they don't want me waiting about, I said: I knew all this, and said to myself in the kitchen: it's disgraceful, it's sinful, to lead a man into sin, for all my anger went out against the woman, and not against Mr. Congreve, for in my eyes he seemed to be nothing more than a victim of a designing woman; that is how I looked at it at the time, being but a youngster only just come from a convent school.

I don't think that anyone suffered more than I did in those days. It seems all very silly now when I look back upon it, but it was very real then. It does seem silly to tell that I used to lie awake all night thinking to myself that Mr. Congreve was an elegant gentleman and I but a poor serving girl whom he could never look upon as anybody, except one to go to the cellar for coal or to the kitchen to fetch his breakfast. I don't think I ever hoped he'd fall in love with me. It wasn't as bad as that. It was the hopelessness of it that set the tears streaming down my cheeks over my pillow, and I used to stuff the sheet into my mouth to keep back the sobs lest my old nurse should hear me; it wouldn't do to keep her awake for she was very ill at that time; and soon afterwards she died, and then I was left alone, without a friend in the world. The only people I knew were the charwomen that lived in Temple Lane, and the bugler, who began to bully me, saying that I must continue to give

him the same money he had had from my old nurse. He caught me on the stair once and twisted my arm till I thought he'd broken it. The month after my old nurse's death till I went to earn my living as a waiter was the hardest time of all, and Mr. Congreve's kindness seemed to hurt me more than anything. If he'd only spared me his kind words, and not spoken about the extra money he was going to give me for my attendance on his lady, I shouldn't have felt so much that they had lain side by side in the bed that I was making. She brought a dressing gown to the chambers and some slippers, and then more luggage came along; and I think she must have guessed I was in love with Mr. Congreve, for I heard them quarrelling—my name was mentioned; and I said: I can't put up with it any longer, whatever the next life may be it can't be worse than this one for me at least, and as I went to and fro between Temple Lane and the Chambers in Temple Gardens I began to think how I might make away with myself. I don't know if you know London, Hubert? Yes, he said; I'm a Londoner, but I come here to work every year. Then if you know the Temple, you know that the windows of Temple Gardens overlooked the river. I used to stand at those windows watching the big brown river flowing through its bridges, thinking all the while of the sea into which it went, and that I must plunge into the river and be borne away down to the sea, or picked up before I got there. It didn't matter which, for my trouble would be over, and that was all I could think about, making an end to my trouble.

I couldn't get the Frenchwoman out of my thoughts, she and Mr. Congreve sitting together; and her suspicions that I cared for him made her harder on me than she need have been—always coming the missis over me. It was her airs and graces that stiffened my back more than anything else. I'm sure if it hadn't been that I met

Bessie Lawrence I should have done away with myself. She was the woman that used to look after the chambers under Mr. Congreve's. We stopped talking outside the gateway by King's Bench Walk, if you know the Temple you know where I mean. Bessie kept talking, but I wasn't listening, only catching a word here and there, not waking up from the dream how to make away with myself till I heard the words: if I had a figure like yours. As nobody had ever spoken about my figure before, I said: now what has my figure got to do with it? You haven't been listening to me, she said, and I answered that I had only missed the last few words. Just missed the last few words, she said testily: you didn't hear me telling you there is a big dinner at the Freemason's Tavern to-night, and they're short of waiters. But what has that go to do with my figure? I asked. That shows, she rapped out, that you haven't been listening to me. Didn't I say that if it wasn't for my hips and bosom I'd very soon be into a suit of evening clothes and getting ten shillings for the job. But what has that got to do with my figure? I repeated. Your figure is just the one for a waiter's. Oh, I'd never thought of that, says I, and we said no more. But after leaving her the words kept on in my head: so my figure is just the one for a waiter's, till my eyes caught sight of a bundle of old clothes that Mr. Congreve had given me to sell. A suit of evening clothes was in it. You see Mr. Congreve and myself were about the same height and build. The trousers will want a bit of shortening, I said to myself; and I set to work, and at six o'clock I was in them and down at the Freemason's Tavern answering questions, saying that I had been accustomed to waiting at table.

All the waiting I had done was bringing in Mr. Congreve's dinner from the kitchen to the sitting-room; a roast chicken or a chop, and in my fancy it seemed to me that the waiting at the Freemason's Tavern would be

much the same. The head waiter looked me over a bit doubtfully and asked if I had had experience with public dinners: I thought he was going to turn me down, but they were short-handed so I was taken on, and it was a mess that I made of it, getting in everybody's way; but my awkwardness was taken in good part and I received ten shillings, which was good money for the sort of work I did that night. But what stood to me was not so much the ten shillings that I earned as the bit I had learned. It was only a bit, not much bigger than a threepenny bit; but I had worked round a table at a big dinner, and feeling certain that I could learn what I didn't know, I asked for another job. I suppose the head waiter could see that there was the making of a waiter in me, for on coming out of the Freemason's Tavern he stopped me to ask if I was going back to private service as soon as I could get a place. The food I'd had and the excitement of the dinner, the guests, the lights, the talk stood to me, and things seemed clearer than they had ever seemed before. My feet were of the same mind, for they wouldn't walk towards the Temple, and I answered the head waiter that I'd be glad of another job. Well, said he, you don't know much about the work, but you're an honest lad, I think, so I'll see what I can do for you, and at the moment a thought struck him. Just take this letter, said he, to the Holborn Restaurant. There's a dinner there and I've had word that they're short of a waiter or two. Be off as fast as you can.

And away I went as fast as my legs could carry me, and they took me there in good time, in front, by a few seconds, of two other fellows who were after the job. I got it. Another job came along, and another and another. Each of them jobs was worth ten shillings to me, to say nothing of the learning of the trade, and having, as I've said, the making of a waiter in me, it didn't take more than about three months for me to be

as quick and as smart and as watchful as the best of them, and without them qualities no one will succeed in waiting. I have worked round the tables in the biggest places in London and all over England in all the big towns, in Manchester, in Liverpool and Birmingham; I am well known at the old Hen and Chickens, at the Queen's and the Plough and Harrow in Birmingham. It was seven years ago that I came here, and here it would seem that I've come to be looked on as a fixture, for the Bakers are good people to work for and I didn't like to leave them when, three years ago, a good place was offered to me, so kind were they to me in my illness. I suppose one never remains always in the same place, but I may as well be here as elsewhere.

Seven years working in Morrison's Hotel, Page said, and on the second floor? Yes, the second floor is the best in the hotel, the money is better than in the coffee-room, and that is why the Bakers have put me here, Albert replied. I wouldn't care to leave them; they've often said they don't know what they'd do without me. Seven years, Hubert repeated, the same work up the stairs and down the stairs, banging into the kitchen and out again. There's more variety in the work than you think for, Hubert, Albert answered. Every family is different, and so you're always learning. Seven years, Page repeated, neither man nor woman, just a perhapser. He spoke these words more to himself than to Nobbs, but feeling he had expressed himself incautiously he raised his eyes and read on Albert's face that the words had gone home, and that this outcast from both sexes felt her loneliness perhaps more keenly than before. As Hubert was thinking what words he might use to conciliate Albert with her lot, Albert repeated the words: neither man nor woman, yet nobody ever suspected, she muttered, and never would have suspected me till the day of my death if it hadn't been for that flea that you brought in with you. But what

harm did the flea do? I'm bitten all over, said Albert, scratching her thighs. Never mind the bites, said Hubert, we wouldn't have had this talk if it hadn't been for the fleas and I shouldn't have heard your story.

Tears trembled on Albert's eyelids; she tried to keep them back, but they overflowed the lids and were soon running down her cheeks. You've heard my story, she said. I thought nobody would ever hear it, and I thought I should never cry again, and Hubert watched the gaunt woman shaking with sobs under a coarse night-shirt. It's all much sadder than I thought it was, and if I'd known how sad it was I shouldn't have been able to live through it. But I've jostled along somehow, she said, always merry and bright, with never anyone to speak to, not really to speak to, only to ask for plates and dishes, for knives and forks and such like, tablecloths and napkins, cursing betimes the life one has been through, for the feeling cannot help coming over us, perhaps over the biggest as over the smallest, that all our trouble is for nothing and can end in nothing. It might have been better if I had taken the plunge. But why am I thinking these things? It's you that has set me thinking, Hubert. I'm sorry if—— Oh, it's no use being sorry, and I'm a great silly to cry like this. I thought that regrets had passed away with the petticoats. But you've awakened the woman in me. You've brought it all up again. But I mustn't let on like this; it's very foolish of an old perhapser like me, neither man nor woman! But I can't help it.

She began to sob again, and in the midst of her grief the word loneliness was uttered, and when the paroxysm was over, Hubert said: lonely, yes, I suppose it is lonely, and he put out his hand towards Albert. You're very good, Mr. Page, and I'm sure you'll keep my secret, though indeed I don't care very much whether you do or not. Now, don't let on like that again, Hubert said.

Let us have a little chat and try to understand each other. I'm sure it's lonely for you to live without man or without woman, thinking like a man and feeling like a woman. You seem to know all about it, Hubert. I hadn't thought of it like that before myself, but when you speak the words I feel you have spoken the truth. I suppose I was wrong to put off my petticoats and step into those trousers. I wouldn't go so far as to say that, Hubert answered, and the words were so unexpected that Albert forgot her grief for a moment and said: why do you say that, Hubert? Well, because I was thinking, he replied, that you might marry. But I was never a success as a girl. Men didn't look at me then so I'm sure they wouldn't now I'm a middle-aged woman. Marriage! whom should I marry? No, there's no marriage for me in the world, I must go on being a man. But you won't tell on me, you've promised, Hubert. Of course I won't tell, but I don't see why you shouldn't marry. What do you mean, Hubert? You aren't putting a joke on me, are you? If you are it's very unkind. A joke upon you? no, Hubert answered. I didn't mean you should marry a man but you might marry a girl. Marry a girl? Albert repeated, her eyes wide open and staring. A girl? Well, anyway, that's what I've done, Hubert replied. But you're a young man and a very handsome young man too. Any girl would like to have you, and I daresay they were all after you before you met the right girl. I'm not a young man, I'm a woman, Hubert replied. Now I know for certain, cried Albert, you're putting a joke upon me. A woman! Yes, a woman, you can feel for yourself if you don't believe me. Put your hand under my shirt; you'll find nothing there. Albert moved away instinctively, her modesty having been shocked. You see I offered myself like that feeling you couldn't take my word for it. It isn't a thing there can be any doubt about. Oh, I believe you, Albert

replied. And now that that matter is settled, Hubert began, perhaps you'd like to hear my story, and without waiting for an answer she related the story of her unhappy marriage: her husband, a house-painter, had changed towards her altogether after the birth of her second child, leaving her without money for food and selling up the home twice. At last I decided to have another cut at it, Hubert went on, and catching sight of my husband's working clothes one day I said to myself: he's often made me put these on and go out and help him with his job, why shouldn't I put them on for myself and go away for good? I didn't like leaving the children, but I couldn't remain with him. But the marriage? Albert asked. It was lonely going home to an empty room: I was as lonely as you, and one day, meeting a girl as lonely as myself, I said: come along, and we arranged to live together, each paying our share. She had her work and I had mine, and between us we made a fair living, and this I can say with truth that we haven't known an unhappy hour since we married. People began to talk so we had to. I'd like you to see our home. I always return to my home after a job is finished with a light heart and leave it with a heavy one. But I don't understand, Albert said. What don't you understand? Hubert asked. Whatever Albert's thoughts were, they faded from her, and her eyelids dropped over her eyes. You're falling asleep, Hubert said, and I'm doing the same. It must three o'clock in the morning and I've to catch the five o'clock train. I can't think now of what I was going to ask you, Albert muttered, but you'll tell me in the morning, and turning over, she made a place for Hubert.

CHAP. XLVIII.

WHAT has become of him? Albert said, rousing herself, and then, remembering that Hubert's intention was to

catch the early train, she began to remember. His train, she said, started from Amiens Street at—— I must have slept heavily for him—for her not to have awakened me or she must have stolen away very quietly. But lord a-massy, what time is it? And seeing she had overslept herself a full hour, she began to dress herself, muttering all the while: such a thing never happened to me before. And the hotel as full as it can hold. Why didn't they send for me? The missis had a thought of my bed-fellow, mayhap, and let me sleep it out. I told her I shouldn't close an eye till she left me. But I mustn't fall into the habit of sheing him. Lord, if the missis knew everything! But I've overslept myself a full hour, and if nobody has been up before somebody soon will be. The greater the haste the less speed. All the same, despite the difficulty of finding her clothes, Albert was at work on her landing some twenty minutes after, running up and down the stairs, preparing for the different breakfasts in the half-dozen sitting-rooms given to her charge, driving everybody before her, saying: we're late to-day, and the house full of visitors. How is it that 54 isn't turned out? Has 35 rung his bell? Lord, Albert, said a housemaid, I wouldn't worry my fat because I was down late, once in a way don't hurt. And sitting up half the night talking to Mr. Page, said another maid, and then rounding on us. Half the night talking, Albert repeated. My bed-fellow! Where is Mr. Page? I didn't hear him go away; he may have missed his train for aught I know. But do you be getting on with your work, and let me be getting on with mine. You're very cross this morning, Albert, the maid-servant muttered, and retired to chatter with two other maids who were looking over the banisters at the time.

Well, Mr. Nobbs—— the head porter began, when Albert came running downstairs to see some visitors off, and to receive his tips: well, Mr. Nobbs, how did you find your bed-fellow? Oh, he was all right, but I'm not used

to bed-fellows, and he brought a flea with him, and it kept me awake; and when I did fall asleep, I slept so heavily that I was an hour late. I hope he caught his train. But what is all this pother about bed-fellows? Albert asked himself, as she returned to her landing. Page hasn't said anything, no, she's said nothing, for we're both in the same boat, and to tell on me would be to tell on herself. I'd never have believed if—— Albert's modesty prevented her from finishing the sentence. She's a woman right enough. But the cheek of it, to marry an innocent girl! Did she let the girl into the secret, or leave her to find it out when——

This was a question one might ponder on, and by luncheon time Albert was inclined to believe that Hubert told her wife before—— She couldn't have had the cheek to wed her, Albert said, without warning her that things might not turn out as she fancied. Mayhap, Albert continued, she didn't tell her before they wedded and mayhap she did, and being one of them like myself that isn't always hankering after a man, she was glad to live with Hubert for companionship. Albert tried to remember the exact words that Hubert had used. It seemed to her that Hubert had said that she lived with a girl first, and wedded her to put a stop to people's scandal. Of course they could hardly live together except as man and wife. She remembered Hubert saying that she always returned home with a light heart and never left it without a heavy one. So it would seem that this marriage was as successful as any, and a great deal more than the majority.

At that moment 35 rang his bell. Albert hurried to answer it, and several hours wore away before a moment propitious to reverie occurred again.

It was late in the evening, between nine and ten o'clock, when the guests were away at the theatres and concerts, and nobody was about but two maids; it was

when these had ceased to trouble her with chatter that Albert, with her napkin over her shoulder, dozed and meditated on the advice that Hubert had given her. She should marry, Hubert had said; Hubert had married. Of course it wasn't a real marriage, it couldn't be that, but a very happy one it would seem. But the girl must have understood that she was not marrying a man. Did Hubert tell her before marriage or after marriage, and what were the words? It seemed to her she would give a great deal to know the exact words. After all I've worked hard, she said, and her thoughts melted away into a long meditation of what her life had been for the last five and twenty years, a mere drifting, it seemed to her to have been, from one hotel to another, without friends; meeting, it is true, sometimes men and women who seemed willing to be friendly. But her secret had forced her to live apart from both sexes; the clothes she wore smothered the woman within her; she no longer thought and felt as she used to when she was a woman, and she didn't think and feel like a man; a mere appearance, nothing more; no wonder she was lonely. But Hubert had put off her sex, so she said, and the suspicion that she had put a joke upon her rose up in her mind and died away into a long dream of what Hubert's home was like. Why had she not asked for particulars?

That's 54 again, one of the maids called from the end of the passage, and when Albert had received 54's order and executed it, she returned to her seat in the passage, her napkin over her shoulder, and resumed her reverie. It seemed to her that Hubert had mentioned that her wife was a milliner; she may not have spoken the word milliner, but if she hadn't, it was strange that the word should keep coming up in her mind. There was no reason why the wife shouldn't be a milliner, and if that were so it was as likely as not they owned a house in some quiet, insignificant street, letting the dining-

room, back room and kitchen to a widow or to a pair of widows. The drawing-room was the workroom and showroom; Page and his wife slept in the room above. On second thought it seemed to Albert that if the business were millinery it might be that Mrs. Page would prefer the ground floor for her showroom. A third and fourth distribution of the rooms presented itself to Albert's imagination. On thinking the matter over again it seemed to her that Hubert had not spoken of a millinery business; that was a mistake; she had said her wife was a seamstress. Now if that were so, a small dressmaker's business in a quiet street would be in keeping with all Hubert said about the home. Albert was not sure, however, that if she found a girl willing to share her life with her, it would be a seamstress's business she would be on the look-out for. She thought that a sweetmeat shop, newspapers and tobacco would be her choice.

Why shouldn't she make a fresh start? Hubert had foreseen no difficulties. She had said—Albert could recall the very words—I didn't mean you should marry a man, but a girl. She had saved, oh! how she had tried to save, for she didn't wish to end her days in the workhouse. She had saved upwards of five hundred pounds, which was quite enough to purchase a little business, and her heart dilated as she thought of her two successful investments in house property. In six months' time she hoped to have six hundred pounds, and if it took her two years to find a partner and a business, she would have at least seventy or eighty pounds more, which would be a great help, for it would be a mistake to put one's money into a falling business. If she found a partner! she'd have to do like Hubert; for marriage would put a stop to all tittle-tattle; she'd be able to keep her place at Morrison's Hotel, or perhaps leave Morrison's and rely on jobs; and with her connection it would be a case of picking and choosing the best: ten and sixpence

a night, nothing under. She dreamed of a round. Belfast, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford rose up in her imagination, and after a month's absence, a couple of months maybe, she would return home, her heart anticipating a welcome—a real welcome, for though she would continue to be a man to the world, she would be a woman to the dear one at home. With a real partner, one whose heart was in the business, they might make as much as two hundred pounds a year—four pounds a week! And with four pounds a week their home would be as pretty and happy as any in the city of Dublin. Two rooms and a kitchen were what she foresaw. The furniture began to creep into her imagination little by little. A large sofa by the fireplace covered with a chintz! But chintz dirtied quickly in the city; a dark velvet sofa might be more suitable. It would cost a great deal of money, five or six pounds; and at that rate fifty pounds wouldn't go very far, for they must have a fine double-bed mattress; and if they were going to do things in that style, the home would cost them eighty pounds. With luck these eighty pounds could be earned within the next two years at Morrison's Hotel.

Albert ran over in her mind the tips she had received: the people in 34 were leaving to-morrow. They were always good for half-a-sovereign, and she decided there and then that to-morrow's half sovereign must be put aside as a beginning of a sum of money for the purchase of a clock to stand on a marble chimney-piece or a mahogany chiffonier. A few days after she got a sovereign from a departing guest, and it revealed a pair of pretty candlesticks and a round mirror. Her tips were no longer mere white and yellow metal stamped with the effigy of a dead king or a living queen, but symbols of the future life that awaited her. An unexpected crown set her pondering on the colour of the curtains in their sitting-room, and Albert became suddenly conscious that

a change had come into her life: the show was the same—carrying plates and dishes upstairs and downstairs, and taking orders for drinks and cigars; but behind the show a new life was springing up—a life strangely personal and associated with the life without only in this much, that the life without was now a vassal state paying tribute to the life within. She wasn't as good a servant as heretofore. She knew it. Certain absences of mind, that was all; and the servants as they went by with their dusters began to wonder whatever Albert could be dreaming of.

It was about this time that the furnishing of the parlour at the back of the shop was completed, likewise that of the bedroom above the shop, and Albert had just entered on another dream—a dream of a shop with two counters, one at which cigars, tobacco, pipes and matches were sold, and at the other all kinds of sweetmeats, a shop with a door leading to her wife's parlour. A changing figure the wife was in Albert's imagination, turning from fair to dark, from plump to slender, but capturing her imagination equally in all her changes; sometimes she was accompanied by a child of three or four, a boy, the son of a dead man, for in one of her dreams Albert married a widow. In another and more frequent dream she married a woman who had transgressed the moral code and been deserted before the birth of her child. In this case it would be supposed that Albert had done the right thing, for after leading the girl astray he had made an honest woman of her. Albert would be the father in everybody's eyes except the mother's, and she hoped that the child's mother would outgrow all the memory of the accidental seed sown, as the saying runs, in a foolish five minutes.

A child would be a pleasure to them both, and a girl in the family way appealed to her more than a widow; a girl that some soldier, the boot-boy or the hotel porter had gotten into trouble; and Albert kept her eyes and ears open, hoping to rescue from her precarious situation

one of those unhappy girls that were always cropping up in Morrison's Hotel. Several had had to leave the hotel last year but not one this year. But some revivalist meetings were going to be held in Dublin. Many of our girls attend them, and an unlucky girl will be in luck's way if we should run across one another. Her thoughts passed into a dream of the babe that would come into the world some three or four months after their marriage, her little soft hands and expressive eyes claiming their protection, asking for it. What matter whether she calls me father or mother? They are but mere words that the lips speak, but love is in the heart and only love matters.

CHAP. XLIX.

NOW whatever can Albert be brooding? an idle housemaid asked herself as she went by, flicking her duster. Is he in love? is he brooding a marriage? Which of us? or perhaps it's some girl outside!

That Albert was brooding something, that there was something on his mind, became the talk of the hotel, and soon after it came to be noticed that Albert, who till now had showed little desire to leave the hotel, was eager to avail himself of every excuse to absent himself from duty in the hotel. He had been seen in the smaller streets looking up at the houses. He had saved a good deal of money, and some of his savings were invested in house property, so it was possible that his presence in these streets might be explained by the supposition that he was investing new sums of money in house property, or, and it was the second suggestion that stimulated the imagination, that Albert was going to be married and was looking out for a house for his wife.

Albert had been seen talking with Annie Watts; but she was not in the family way after all, and despite her wistful eyes and gentle voice she was not chosen. Her

heart is not in her work, Albert said; she thinks only of when she can get out, and that isn't the sort for a shop, whereas Dorothy Keyes was a glutton for work, but Albert couldn't abide the tall, angular woman, built like a boy, with a neck like a swan's. Besides her unattractive appearance, her manner was abrupt. But Alice's small, neat figure and quick intelligence marked her out for the job. Alas! Alice was hot-tempered. We should quarrel, Albert said, and picking up her napkin, which had slipped from her knee to the floor, she fell to thinking of the maids on the floor above. A certain stateliness of figure and also of gait put the thought into her mind that Mary O'Brien would make an attractive shopwoman. But her second thoughts were that Mary O'Brien was a Papist, and the experience of Irish Protestants shows that Papists and Protestants don't mix.

She had just begun to consider the next housemaid, when a voice interrupted her musing. That lazy girl, Annie Watts, on the lookout for an excuse to chatter the time away instead of being about her work, were the words that crossed Albert's mind as she raised her eyes, and so unwelcoming were they that Annie in her nervousness began to hesitate and stammer, unable for the moment to find a subject, plunging at last, and rather awkwardly, into the news of the arrival of the new kitchen-maid, Helen Dawes, but never dreaming that the news could have any interest for Albert. To her surprise, Albert's eyes lighted up. Do you know her? Annie asked. Know her? Albert answered. No, I don't know her, but—— At that moment a bell rang. Oh, bother, Annie said, and while she moved away idling along the banisters, Albert hurried down the passage.

No. 47 wanted writing-paper and envelopes; he couldn't write with the pens the hotel furnished, would Albert be so kind as to ask the page-boy to fetch some J's. With pleasure, Albert said; with pleasure. Would you

like to have the writing-paper and envelopes before the boy returns with the pens, sir? The visitor answered that the writing-paper and envelopes would be of no use to him till he had gotten the pens. With pleasure, sir; with pleasure; and whilst waiting for the page to return she passed through the swing doors and searched for a new face among the different young women passing to and fro between the white-aproned and white-capped chefs, bringing the dishes to the great zinc counter that divided the kitchen-maids and scullions from the waiters. She must be here, she said, and returned again to the kitchen in the hope of meeting the new-comer, Helen Dawes, who, when she was found, proved to be very unlike the Helen Dawes of Albert's imagination. A thick-set, almost swarthy girl of three and twenty, rather under than above the medium height, with white, even teeth, but unfortunately protruding, giving her the appearance of a rabbit. Her eyes seemed to be dark brown, but on looking into them Albert discovered them to be grey-green, round eyes that dilated and flashed wonderfully while she talked. Her face lighted up; and there was a vindictiveness in her voice that appeared and disappeared; Albert suspected her, and was at once frightened and attracted. Vindictiveness in her voice! How could such a thought have come into my mind? she said a few days after. A more kindly girl it would be difficult to find. How could I have been so stupid? She is one of those, Albert continued, that will be a success in everything she undertakes, and dreams began soon after that the sweet-stuff and tobacco shop could hardly fail to prosper under her direction. One thing was certain; nobody could befool that girl. A girl with a head on her shoulders, she continued, is a pearl. I shall feel certain when I am away at work everything will be all right at home.

It's a pity that she isn't in the family way. It would be pleasant to have a little one running about the shop

asking for lemon drops and to hear him calling us father and mother. And it was with a wrench that Albert renounced for ever hope of a son. At that moment a strange thought flitted across Albert's mind—after all, it could not matter to her if Helen were to get into the family way later, when they were settled. But she wasn't sure that it wouldn't matter. It is a man always that divides women, and sets the friendship of years at naught. It might be better to choose an older woman; it might be better, but Albert was unable to keep herself from asking Helen to walk out with her, and the next time they met the words slipped out of her mouth: I shall be off duty at three to-day, and if you're not engaged—— I'm off duty at three, Helen answered. Are you engaged? Albert asked. Helen hesitated, it being the truth that she had been and was still walking out with one of the scullions, and was not sure how he'd look upon her going out with another, even though that one was such a harmless fellow as Albert Nobbs. Harmless in himself, she thought, and with a good smell of money rising out of his pockets, very different from Joe, who seldom had a train fare upon him. But she hankered after Joe, and wouldn't give Albert a promise till she had asked him. Wants to walk out with you? Why, he's never been known to walk out with man, woman or child before. Well, that's a good one! I'd like to know what he's after, and I'm not jealous; you can go out with him, there's no harm in Albert. I'm on duty: just go for a turn with him. Poke him up and see what he's after, and take him into a sweetshop and bring back a box of chocolates; we'll share them together. Do you like chocolates? Helen asked, and, her eyes flashing, she stood looking at Joe, who, thinking that her temper was rising, and wishing to quell it, asked hurriedly where she was going to meet him. At the corner, she answered. He's there already. Then be off, he said, and his tone

grated. You wouldn't like me to keep him waiting? Helen said. Oh, dear no, not for Joe, not for Joseph, if he knows it, the scullion replied, lilting the song.

Helen turned away, hoping that none of the maids would peach upon her, and Albert's heart rejoiced at seeing her on the other side of the street waiting for the tram to go by before she crossed it. Were you afraid I wasn't coming? she asked, and Albert, not being ready with words, answered shyly: not very. A stupid answer this seemed to be to Helen, and it was in the hope of shuffling out of a tiresome silence that Albert asked her if she liked chocolates. Something under the tooth will help the time away, was the answer she got; and they went in search of a sweetmeat shop, Albert thinking that a shilling or one and sixpence would see her through it. But in a moment Helen's eyes were all over the shop, and spying out quickly some large pictured boxes, she asked Albert if she might have one, and it being their first day out, Albert answered, yes; but she could not keep back the words: I'm afraid they'd cost a lot.

Helen's face blackened, and she shook up her shoulders disdainfully, so frightening Albert that she pressed a second box on Helen—one to pass the time with, another to take home. To such a show of good will Helen felt she must respond and her tongue rattled on pleasantly as she walked, crunching the chocolates, two between each lamp-post, Albert stinting herself to one, which she sucked slowly, hardly enjoying it at all, so worried was she by the loss of three and sixpence. As if Helen guessed the cause of Albert's disquiet, she called on her suitor to admire the damsel on the box, but Albert could not disengage her thoughts sufficiently from Helen's expensive tastes. If every walk were to cost three and sixpence there wouldn't be a lot left for the home in six months' time. And she fell to calculating how much it would cost her if they were to walk out once a week.

Three fours are twelve and four sixpences are two shillings, fourteen shillings a month, twice that is twenty-eight; twenty-eight shillings a month, that is if Helen wanted two boxes a week. At this rate she'd be spending sixteen pounds, sixteen shillings a year. Lord a-massy! But perhaps Helen wouldn't want two boxes of chocolates every time they went out together—— If she didn't, she'd want other things, and catching sight of a jeweller's shop, Albert called Helen's attention to a cyclist that had only just managed to escape a tram car by a sudden wriggle. But Albert was always unlucky. Helen had been wishing this long while for a bicycle, and if she did not ask Albert to buy her one it was because another jeweller's came into view. She stopped to gaze for a moment. Albert's heart seemed to stand still, but Helen continued her chocolates, secure in her belief that the time had not yet come for substantial presents.

At Sackville Street bridge Helen thought she would like to turn back, having little taste for the meaner parts of the city, but Albert wished to show her the north side, and she began to wonder what he could find to interest him in these streets and why he should stand in admiration before all the small newspaper and tobacco shops, till she remembered suddenly that he had invested his savings in house property. Could these be his houses? All his own? and, moved by this consideration, she gave a more attentive ear to his account of the daily taking of these shops.

Albert was a richer man than anybody believed him to be, but he was a mean one. The idea of his thinking twice about a box of chocolates! I'll show him, and she began to regret she had not stopped in front of a big draper's shop in Sackville Street and asked him for a pair of six-button gloves, and resolved to make amends for her slackness, and would ask Albert for a parasol the next time they went out together. She needed one,

and some shoes and stockings, and a silk kerchief would not be amiss, and at the end of the third month of their courtship it seemed to her that the time had come for her to speak of bangles, saying that for three pounds she could have a pretty one—one that would be a real pleasure to wear, it would always remind her of him. Albert coughed up with humility, and she felt that she had "got him," as she put it to herself, and afterwards to Joe Mackins.

So he parted easily, Joe remarked, and pushing Helen aside he began to whip up the *rémoulade,* that had begun to show signs of turning, saying he'd have the chef after him. But I say, old girl, since he's coughing up so easily you might bring me something back; and a briar-wood pipe and a pound or two of tobacco seemed the least she might obtain for him. And Helen answered that to get these she would have to ask Albert for money. And why shouldn't you? Joe returned. Ask him for a thin 'un, and mayhap he'll give you a thick 'un. It's the first quid that's hard to get; every time after it is like shelling peas. Do you think he's that far gone on me? Helen asked. Well, don't you? Why should he give you these things if he wasn't? Joe answered.

Helen fell to thinking, Joe asked her of what she was thinking, and she replied that it was difficult to say: she had walked out with many a man before but never with one like Albert Nobbs. In what way is he different? Joe asked. Helen was perplexed in her telling of Albert Nobbs' slackness. You mean that he doesn't pull you about, Joe rapped out; and she answered that there was something of that in it. All the same, she continued, that isn't the whole of it. I've been out before with men that didn't pull me about, but he seems to have something on his mind, and half the time he's thinking. Well, what does it matter, Joe asked, so long as there is coin in the pocket and so long as you have a hand to

pull it out? Helen didn't like this description of Albert Nobbs' courtship, and the words rose to her lips to tell Joseph that she didn't want to go out any more with Albert, that she was tired of the job, but the words were quelled on her lips by a remark from Joe. Next time you go out with him work him up a bit and see what he is made of; just see if there's a sting in him or if he is no better than a capon. A capon! And what is a capon? she asked. A capon is a cut fowl. He may be like one. She resolved to get at the truth of the matter next time they went out together. It did seem odd that he should be willing to buy presents and not want to kiss her. In fact, it was more than odd. It might be as Joe had said. I might as well go out with my mother. Now what did it all mean? Was it a blind? Some other girl that he—— Not being able to concoct a sufficiently reasonable story, Helen relinquished the attempt, without, however, regaining control of her temper, which had begun to rise, and which continued to boil up in her and overflow till her swarthy face was almost ugly. I'm beginning to feel ugly towards him, she said to herself. He is either in love with me or he's—— And trying to discover his purpose, she descended the staircase, saying to herself: now Albert must know that I'm partial to Joe Mackins. It can't be that he doesn't suspect. Well, I'm damned.

CHAP. L.

BUT Helen's perplexity on leaving the hotel was no greater than Albert's as she stood waiting by the kerb. She knew that Helen carried on with Joe Mackins, and she also knew that Joe Mackins had nothing to offer Helen but himself. She even suspected that some of the money she had given to Helen had gone to purchase pipes and tobacco for Joe: a certain shrewdness is not

inconsistent with innocence, and it didn't trouble her much that Helen was perhaps having her fling with Joe Mackins. She didn't want Helen to fall into evil ways, but it was better for her to have her fling before than after marriage. On the other hand, a woman that has been bedded might be dissatisfied to settle down with another woman, though the home offered her was better than any she could get from a man. She might hanker after children, which was only natural, and Albert felt that she would like a child as well as another. A child might be arranged for if Helen wanted one, but it would never do to have the father hanging about the shop: he would have to be got rid of as soon as Helen was in the family way. But could he be got rid of? Not very easily if Joe Mackins was the father; she foresaw trouble and would prefer another father, almost any other. But why trouble herself about the father of Helen's child before she knew whether Helen would send Joe packing, which she'd have to do clearly if they were to wed—she and Helen. Their wedding was what she had to look to, whether she should confide her sex to Helen to-night or wait. Why not to-night as well as to-morrow night? she asked herself. But how was she to tell it to Helen? Blurt it out—I've something to tell you, Helen. I'm not a man, but a woman like yourself. No, that wouldn't do. How did Hubert tell her wife she was a woman? If she had only asked she'd have been spared all this trouble. After hearing Hubert's story she should have said: I've something to ask you, but sleep was so heavy on their eyelids that they couldn't think any more and both of them were falling asleep, which wasn't to be wondered at, for they had been talking for hours. It was on her mind to ask how her wife found out. Did Hubert tell her or did the wife—— Albert's modesty prevented her from pursuing the subject; and she turned on herself, saying that she could not leave Helen to find out she

was a woman; of that she was certain, and of that only. She'd have to tell Helen that. But should the confession come before they were married, or should she reserve it for the wedding night in the bridal chamber on the edge of the bed afterwards? If it were not for Helen's violent temper—— And she fell to thinking: I in my nightshirt, she in her nightgown. On the other hand, she might quieten down after an outburst and begin to see that it might be very much to her advantage to accept the situation, especially if a hope were held out to her of a child by Joe Mackins in two years' time; she'd have to agree to wait till then, and in two years Joe would probably be after another girl. But if she were to cut up rough and do me an injury! Helen might call the neighbours in, or the policeman, who'd take them both to the station. She'd have to return to Liverpool or to Manchester. She didn't know what the penalty would be for marrying one of her own sex. She'd have to catch the morning boat.

One of the advantages of Dublin is that one can get out of it as easily as out of any other city. Steamers were always leaving, morning and evening; she didn't know how many, but a great many. On the other hand, if she took the straight course and confided her sex to Helen before the marriage, Helen might promise not to tell; but she might break her promise; life in Morrison's Hotel would be unendurable, and she'd have to endure it. What a hue and cry! But one way was as bad as the other. If she had only asked Hubert Page, but she hadn't a thought at the time of going to do likewise. What's one man's meat is another man's poison, and she began to regret Hubert's confession to her. If it hadn't been for that flea she wouldn't be in this mess; and she was deep in it! Three months' company isn't a day, and everybody in Morrison's Hotel asking whether she or Joe Mackins would be the winner, urging her to

make haste else Joe would come with a rush at the finish. A lot of racing talk that she didn't understand—or only half. If she could get out of this mess somehow—— But it was too late. She must go through with it. But how? A different sort of girl altogether was needed, but she liked Helen. Her way of standing on the doorstep, her legs a little apart, jawing a tradesman, and she'd stand up to Mrs. Baker and to the chef himself. She liked the way Helen's eyes lighted up when a thought came into her mind; her cheery laugh warmed Albert's heart as nothing else did. Before she met Helen she often feared her heart was growing cold. She might try the world over and not find one that would run the shop she had in mind as well as Helen. But the shop wouldn't wait, and at that moment she remembered the letter she had received yesterday: the owners of the shop would withdraw their offer if it was not accepted before next Monday.

And to-day is Friday, Albert said to herself. This evening or never. To-morrow she'll be on duty all day; on Sunday she'll contrive some excuse to get out to meet Joe Mackins. After all, why not this evening? for what must be had better be faced bravely; and while the tram rattled down the long street, Rathmines Avenue, past the small houses atop of high steps, pretty boxes with ornamental trees in the gardens, some with lawns, with here and there a more substantial house set in the middle of three or four fields at least, Albert meditated, plan after plan rising up in her mind; and when the car turned to the right and then to the left, and proceeded at a steady pace up the long incline, Rathgar Avenue, Albert's courage was again at ebb. All the subterfuges she had woven—the long discussion in which she would maintain that marriage should not be considered as a sexual adventure, but a community of interests—seemed to have lost all significance; the points that had seemed

so convincing in Rathmines Avenue were forgotten in Rathgar Avenue, and at Terenure she came to the conclusion that there was no use trying to think the story out beforehand; she would have to adapt her ideas to the chances that would arise as they talked under the trees in the dusk in a comfortable hollow, where they could lie at length out of hearing of the other lads and lasses whom they would find along the banks, resting after the labour of the day in dim contentment, vaguely conscious of each other, satisfied with a vague remark, a kick or a push.

It was the hope that the river's bank would tempt him into confidence that had suggested to Helen that they might spend the evening by the Dodder. Albert had welcomed the suggestion, feeling sure that if there was a place in the world that would make the telling of her secret easy it was the banks of the Dodder; and she was certain she would be able to speak it in the hollow under the ilex-trees. But speech died from her lips, and the silence round them seemed sinister and foreboding. She seemed to dread the river flowing over its muddy bottom, without ripple or eddy; and she started when Helen asked her of what she was thinking. Albert answered: of you, dear; and how pleasant it is to be sitting with you. On these words the silence fell again, and Albert tried to speak, but her tongue was too thick in her mouth; she felt like choking, and the silence was not broken for some seconds, each seeming a minute. At last a lad's voice was heard: I'll see if you have any lace on your drawers; and the lass answered: you sha'n't. There's a pair that's enjoying themselves, Helen said, and she looked upon the remark as fortunate, and hoped it would give Albert the courage to pursue his courtship.

Albert, too, looked upon the remark as fortunate, and she tried to ask if there was lace on all women's drawers; and meditated a reply that would lead her into a con-

fession of her sex. But the words: it's so long since I've worn any, died on her lips; and instead of speaking these words she spoke of the Dodder, saying: What a pity it isn't nearer Morrison's. Where would you have it? Helen replied—flowing down Sackville Street into the Liffey? We should be lying there as thick as herrings, without room to move, or we should be unable to speak to each other without being overheard. I dare say you are right, Albert answered, and she was so frightened that she added: but we have to be back at eleven o'clock, and it takes an hour to get there. We can go back now if you like, Helen rapped out. Albert apologised, and hoping that something would happen to help her out of her difficulty, she began to represent Morrison's Hotel as being on the whole advantageous to servants. But Helen did not respond. She seems to be getting angry and angrier, Albert said to herself, and she asked, almost in despair, if the Dodder was pretty all the way down to the sea. Helen, remembering a walk she had been with Joe, answered: there are woods as far as Dartry—the Dartry Dye works, don't you know them? But I don't think there are any very pretty spots. You know Ring's End, don't you? Albert said he had been there once; and Helen spoke of a large three-masted vessel that she had seen some Sundays ago by the quays. You were there with Joe Mackins, weren't you? Well, what if I was? Only this, Albert answered, that I don't think it is usual for a girl to keep company with two chaps, and I thought —— Now, what did you think? she said. That you didn't care for me well enough—— For what? she asked. You know we've been going out for three months, and it doesn't seem natural to keep talking always, never wanting to put your arm around a girl's waist. I suppose Joe isn't like me then? Albert asked; and she laughed, a scornful little laugh. But, Albert went on, isn't the time for kissing when one is wedded? This is the first time

you've said anything about marriage, Helen rapped out. But I thought there had always been an understanding between us, said Albert. It is only now that I'm able to tell you what I have to offer you. The words were well chosen, and the girl's anger at Albert's neglect was lost sight of. Tell me about it, she said, her eyes and voice revealing her cupidity to Albert, who continued all the same to unfold her plans, losing herself in details that bore Helen, whose thoughts returned to the dilemma she was in—to refuse Albert's offer or to break with Joe; that she should be obliged to do either one or the other was a disappointment to her. All you say about the shop is right enough, but it isn't a very great compliment to a girl. What, to ask her to marry? Albert interjected. Well, no, not if you haven't kissed her first. Don't speak so loud, Albert whispered; I'm sure that couple heard what you said, for they went away laughing. I don't care whether they laughed or cried, Helen answered. You don't want to kiss me, do you? and I don't want to marry a man who isn't in love with me. But I do want to kiss you, and Albert bent down and kissed Helen on both cheeks. Now you can't say I haven't kissed you, can you? You don't call that kissing, do you? she asked. But how do you wish me to kiss you, Helen? Well, you are an innocent, she said, and she kissed Albert vindictively. Helen, leave go of me; I'm not used to such kisses. Because you're not in love, Helen replied. In love? Albert repeated. I loved my old nurse very much, but I never wished to kiss her like that. At this Helen exploded with laughter. So you put me in the same class as your old nurse! Well, after that! Come, she said, taking pity upon him for a moment, are you or are you not in love with me? I love you deeply, Helen, Albert said. Love? she repeated: the men who have walked out with me were in love with me—— In love, Albert repeated after her. I'm sure I love you. I like men to

be in love with me, she answered. But that's like an animal, Helen. Whatever put all that muck in your head? I'm going home, she replied, and rose to her feet and started out on the path leading across the darkening fields. You're not angry with me, Helen? Angry? No, I'm not angry with you; you're a fool of a man, that's all. But if you think me a fool of a man, why did you come out this evening to sit under those trees? And why have we been keeping company for the last three months, Albert asked, going out together every week? You didn't always think me a fool of a man, did you? Yes, I did, she answered; and Albert asked her for a reason for choosing his company. Oh, you bother me asking reasons for everything, Helen said. But why did you make me love you? Albert continued. Well, if I did, what of it? and as for walking out with you, you won't have to complain of that any more. You don't mean, Helen, that we are never going to walk out again? Yes, I do, she said sullenly. You mean that for the future you'll be walking out with Joe Mackins, Albert lamented. That's my business, she answered. By this time they were by the stile at the end of the field, and in the next field there was a hedge to get through and a wood, and the little path they followed was full of such vivid remembrances that Albert could not believe that she was treading it with Helen for the last time, and besought her to take back the words that she would never walk out with him again.

CHAP. LI.

THE tram was nearly empty and they sat at the far end, close together, Albert beseeching her not to cast her off. If I've been stupid to-day, Albert pleaded, it's because I'm tired of the work in the hotel; I shall be different when we get to Lisdoonvarna: we both want a change of air; there's nothing like the salt water and

the cliffs of Clare to put new spirits into a man. You will be different and I'll be different; everything will be different. Don't say no, Helen; don't say no. I've looked forward to this week in Lisdoonvarna. But Helen could not hold out hopes that she would go to Lisdoonvarna, and Albert urged the expense of the lodgings; he had already engaged. We shall have to pay for the lodgings; and there's the new suit of clothes that has just come back from the tailor's; I've looked forward to wearing it, walking with you in the strand, the waves crashing up into cliffs, with green fields among them, I've been told! We shall see the ships passing and wonder whither they are going. I've bought three neckties and some new shirts, and what good will these be to me if you'll not come to Lisdoonvarna with me? The lodgings will have to be paid for, a great deal of money, for I said in my letter we shall want two bedrooms. But there need only be one bedroom, but perhaps I shouldn't have spoken like that. Oh, don't talk to me about Lisdoonvarna, Helen answered. I'm not going to Lisdoonvarna with you. But what is to become of the hat I've ordered for you? Albert asked; the hat with the big feather in it; and I've bought stockings and shoes for you. Tell me, what shall I do with these, and with the gloves? Oh, the waste of money and the heart-breaking! What shall I do with the hat? Albert repeated. Helen didn't answer at once. Presently she said: you can leave the hat with me. And the stockings? Albert asked. Yes, you can leave the stockings. And the shoes? Yes, you can leave the shoes, too. Yet you won't go to Lisdoonvarna with me? No, she said, I'll not go to Lisdoonvarna with you. But you'll take the presents? It was to please you I said I would take them, because I thought it would be some satisfaction to you to know that they wouldn't be wasted. Not wasted? Albert repeated. You'll wear them when you go out with Joe Mackins. Oh, well,

keep your presents. And then the dispute took a different turn, and was continued till they stepped out of the tram at the top of Dawson Street. Albert continued to plead all the way down Dawson Street, and when they were within twenty yards of the hotel, and she saw Helen passing away from her for ever into the arms of Joe Mackins, she begged her not to leave her. We cannot part like this, she cried; let us walk up and down the street from Nassau Street to Clare Street, so that we may talk things over and do nothing foolish. You see, Albert began, I had set my heart on driving on an outside car to the Broadstone with you, and catching a train, and the train going into lovely country, arriving at a place we had never seen, with cliffs, and the sunset behind the cliffs. You've told all that before, Helen said, and, she rapped out, I'm not going to Lisdoonvarna with you. And if that is all you had to say to me we might have gone into the hotel. But there's much more, Helen. I haven't told you about the shop yet. Yes, you have told me all there is to tell about the shop; you've been talking about that shop for the last three months. But, Helen, it was only yesterday that I got a letter saying that they had had another offer for the shop and that they could give me only till Monday morning to close with them; if the lease isn't signed by then we've lost the shop. But do you think, Helen asked, that the shop will be a success? Many shops promise well in the beginning and fade away till they don't get a customer a day.

Albert welcomed this show of interest in her project and, hoping to turn Helen's thoughts from Joe Mackins, she began an appraisement of the shop's situation and the custom it commanded in the neighbourhood and the possibility of developing that custom. We shall be able to make a great success of that shop, and people will be coming to see us, and they will be having tea with us in the parlour, and they'll envy us, saying that never have

two people had such luck as we have had. And our wedding will be—— Will be what? Helen asked. Will be a great wonder. A great wonder, indeed, she replied, but I'm not going to wed you, Albert Nobbs, and now I see it's beginning to rain. I can't remain out any longer. You're thinking of your hat; I'll buy another. We may as well say good-bye she answered, and Albert saw her going towards the doorway. She'll see Joe Mackins before she goes to her bed, and lie dreaming of him; and I shall lie awake in my bed, my thoughts flying to and fro the livelong night, zigzagging up and down like bats.

And then, remembering that if she went into the hotel she might meet Helen and Joe Mackins, she rushed on with a hope in her mind that after a long walk round Dublin she might sleep.

CHAP. LII.

AT the corner of Clare Street, she met two women strolling after a fare—ten shillings or a sovereign, which? she asked herself—and, terrified by the shipwreck of all her hopes, she wished that she were one of them. They at least are women, whereas I am but a perhapser—— In the midst of her grief a wish to speak to them took hold of her. But if I speak to them they'll expect me to——

All the same her steps quickened, and as she passed the two street-walkers she looked round, and one woman, wishing to attract her attention, said: it was almost a love dream.

Almost a love dream? Albert repeated. What are you two women talking about? and the woman next to Albert said: my friend here was telling me of a dream she had last night. A dream, and what was her dream about? Albert asked. Annie was telling me that she was better than a love dream, now do you think she is,

sir? I'll ask Annie herself, Albert replied, and Annie answered him: a shade. Only a shade, Albert returned, and they crossed the street together.

At the corner of Merrion Square a gallant presented himself; he attached himself to Annie's companion, and Albert and Annie were left together.

You haven't told me your name, Albert said, in a sudden inspiration. My name is Kitty MacCan, the girl replied. It's odd we've never met before, Albert replied, hardly knowing what she was saying. We're not often this way, was the answer. And where do you walk usually—of an evening? Albert asked. In Grafton Street or down to College Green; sometimes we cross the river. To walk in Sackville Street, Albert interjected; and he tried to lead the woman into a story of her life. But you're not one of them, she said, that think that we should wash clothes in a nunnery for nothing? Oh no, Albert answered. I'm a waiter in Morrison's Hotel, and, much relieved, the woman began to talk more freely. As soon as the name of Morrison's Hotel passed Albert's lips she began to regret having spoken about herself. But what did it matter now? and the woman didn't seem to have taken heed of the name of the hotel. Is the money good in your hotel? she asked; I've heard that you get as much as half-a-crown for carrying up a cup of tea, and Kitty's story dribbled out in remarks, a simple story that Albert tried to listen to, but her attention wandered, and Kitty, who was not unintelligent, began to guess Albert to be in the middle of some great grief. It doesn't matter about me, Albert answered her, and Annie being a kind girl said to herself: if I can get him to come home with me I'll help him out of his sorrow, if only for a little while. So she continued to try to interest him in herself till they came to Fitzwilliam Place; and it was not till then that Annie remembered she had only three and sixpence left out of the last money she had received, and that

her rent would be due on the morrow. She daren't return home without a gentleman, her landlady would be at her, and the best time of the night was going by talking to a man who seemed like one who would bid her a curt good-night at the door of his hotel. Where did he say his hotel was? she asked herself; and then, aloud, she said: you're a waiter, aren't you? I've forgotten which hotel you said. Albert didn't answer, and, troubled by her companion's silence, she continued: I'm afraid I'm taking you out of your way. No, you aren't; all ways are the same to me. Well, they aren't to me, she replied. I must get some money to-night. I'll give you some money, Albert said. But won't you come home with me? the girl asked. Albert hesitated, tempted by her company. But if they were to go home together her sex would be discovered. But what did it matter if it were discovered? Albert asked herself, and the temptation came again to go home with this woman, to lie in her arms and tell the story that had been locked up so many years. They could both have a good cry together, and what matter would it be to the woman as long as she got the money she desired? She didn't want a man; it was money she was after, money that meant bread and board to her. She seems a kind, nice girl, Albert said, and he was about to risk the adventure when a man came by whom Kitty knew. Excuse me, she said, and Albert saw them walk away together. I'm sorry, said the woman, returning, but I've just met an old friend; another evening, perhaps. Albert would have liked to put her hand in her pocket and pay the woman with some silver for her company, but she was already half-way back to her friend, who stood waiting for her by the lamp-post. The street-walkers have friends, and when they meet them their troubles are over for the night; but my chances have gone by me; and, checking herself in the midst of the irrelevant question, whether it were better to be casual, as they

were, or to have a husband that you could not get rid of, she plunged into her own grief, and walked sobbing through street after street, taking no heed of where she was going.

CHAP. LIII.

YOU can see the poor creature, Alec, walking through the city back and forth, crossing the bridges, any whither, no whither, distracted by grief, till at last fatigue brought her to the door of Morrison's Hotel.

Why, lord, Mr. Nobbs, whatever has kept you out until this hour? the hall porter muttered. I'm sorry, she answered, and while stumbling up the stairs she remembered that even a guest was not received very amiably by the hall porter after two; and for a servant to come in at that time! Her thoughts broke off and she lay too tired to think any more of the hall porter, of herself, of anything; and when the time came for her to go to her work she rose indifferently.

Her work saved her from thinking, and it was not until the middle of the afternoon, when the luncheon-tables had been cleared, that the desire to see and to speak to Helen could not be put aside; but Helen's face wore an ugly, forbidding look, and Albert returned to the second floor without speaking to her. It was not long after that 34 rang his bell, and Albert hoped to get an order that would send her to the kitchen. Are you going to pass me by without speaking again, Helen? We talked enough last night, Helen retorted; there's nothing more to say, and Joe, in such disorder of dress as behooves a scullion, giggled as he went past, carrying a huge pile of plates. I loved my old nurse, but I never thought of kissing her like that, he said, turning on his heel and so suddenly that some of the plates fell with a great clatter. The ill luck that had befallen him seemed well deserved, and Albert returned upstairs and sat in the passages waiting

for the sitting-rooms to ring their bells; and the housemaids, as they came about the head of the stairs with the dusters, wondered how it was that they could not get any intelligible conversation out of the love-stricken waiter. Her lovelorn appearance checked their mirth, pity entered their hearts, and they kept back the words: I loved my old nurse, etc.

After all, he loves the girl, one said to the other, and a moment after, they were joined by another housemaid, who, after listening for a while, went away, saying: there's no torment like the love torment; and the three housemaids, Mary, Alice and Dorothy, offered Albert their sympathy, trying to lead her into little talks with a view to withdrawing her from the contemplation of her own grief, for women are always moved by a love story. Before long their temper turned against Helen, and they often went by asking themselves why she should have kept company with Albert all these months if she didn't mean to wed him.

No wonder the poor man was disappointed. He is destroyed with his grief, said one; look at him, without any more colour in his face than is in my duster. Another said: he doesn't swallow a bit of food. And the third said: I poured out a glass of wine for him that was left over, but he put it away. Isn't love awful? But what can he see in her? another asked, a stumpy, swarthy woman, a little black thorn bush and as full of prickles; and the three women fell to thinking that Albert would have done better to have chosen one of them.

The shop entered into the discussion soon after, and everybody was of opinion that Helen would live to regret her cruelty. The word cruelty did not satisfy; treachery was mentioned, and somebody said that Helen's face was full of treachery. Albert will never recover himself as long as she's here, another remarked. He'll just waste away unless Miss Right comes along. He put all his

eggs into one basket, a man said; you see he'd never been known to walk out with a girl before. And what age do you think he is? I put him down at forty-five, and when love takes a man at that age it takes him badly. This is no calf love, the man said, looking into the women's faces, and you'll never be able to mend matters any of you; and they all declared they didn't wish to, and dispersed in different directions, flicking their dusters and asking themselves if Albert would ever look at another woman.

It was felt generally that he would not have the courage to try again, which was indeed the case, for when it was suggested to Albert that a faint heart never wins a fair lady she answered that her spirit was broken. I shall boil my pot and carry my can, but the spring is broken in me, and it was these words that were remembered and pondered, whereas the joke—I loved my old nurse, etc.—raised no laugh; and the sympathy that Albert felt to be gathering about her cheered her on her way. She was no longer friendless; almost any one of the women in the hotel would have married Albert out of pity for her. But there was no heart in Albert for another adventure; nor any thought in her for anything but her work. She rose every morning and went forth to her work, and was sorry when her work was done, for she had come to dread every interval, knowing that as soon as she sat down to rest the old torment would begin again. Once more she would begin to think that she had nothing more to look forward to: that her life would be but a round of work; a sort of treadmill. She would never see Lisdoonvarna, and the shop with two counters, one at which tobacco, cigarettes and matches were sold, and at the other counter all kinds of sweet-stuffs. Like Lisdoonvarna, it had passed away, it had only existed in her mind—a thought, a dream. Yet it had possessed her completely; and the parlour behind the

shop that she had furnished and refurnished, hanging a round mirror above the mantelpiece, papering the walls with a pretty colourful paper that she had seen in Wicklow Street and had asked the man to put aside for her. She had hung curtains about the windows in her imagination, and she had set two arm-chairs on either side of the hearth, one in green and one in red velvet, for herself and Helen. The parlour too had passed away like Lisdoonvarna, like the shop, a thought, a dream, no more. There had never been anything in her life but a few dreams, and henceforth there would be not even dreams. It was strange that some people came into the world lucky, and others, for no reason, unlucky; she had been unlucky from her birth; she was a bastard; her parents were grand people whose names she did not know, who paid her nurse a hundred a year to keep her, and who died without making any provision for her. She and her old nurse had to go and live in Temple Lane, and to go out charing every morning; Mr. Congreve had a French mistress, and if it had not been for Bessie Lawrence she might have thrown herself in the Thames: she was very near to it that night, and if she had drowned herself all this worry and torment would have been over. She was more resolute in those days than she was now, and would have faced the river, but she shrank from this Dublin river, perhaps because it was not her own river. If one wishes to drown oneself it had better be in one's own country. It is a mistake, she said, to settle in a foreign country. But why is it a mistake? for a perhapser like herself, all countries were the same; go or stay, it didn't matter. Yes, it did; she stayed in Dublin in the hope that Hubert Page would return to the hotel. Only to him could she confide the misfortune that had befallen her, and she'd like to tell somebody. The three might set up together. A happy family they might make. Two women in men's clothes and one in petticoats. If Hubert

were willing. But Hubert's wife might not be willing. If Hubert's wife were dead! Ah! she had never been so long away before. But she would return, and Albert pondered that her own prospect of being allowed to go and live with somebody depended upon the money she could show.

And from that moment her life expended itself in watching for tips, collecting half-crowns, crowns and half-sovereigns. She felt that she must at least replace the money that she had spent giving presents to Helen—and as the months went by and the years she remembered, with increasing bitterness, that she had wasted nearly twenty pounds—on Helen—a cruel, heartless girl that had come into her life for three months and had left her for Joe Mackins, and Albert thanked God that they were now away in London.

She took to counting her money in her room at night.

The half-crowns were folded up in brown-paper packets, the half-sovereigns in blue, the rare sovereigns were in pink paper and all these little packets were hidden away in different corners; some were put in the chimney, some under the carpet. She often thought that these hoards would be safer in the Post Office Bank, but she who has nothing else likes to have her money with her, and a sense of almost happiness awoke in her when she discovered herself to be again as rich as she was before she met Helen.

It was found necessary to remove a plank from the floor; one behind the bed was chosen, and henceforth Albert slept securely over her hoard, or lay awake thinking of Hubert, who might return, and to whom she might confide the story of her misadventure; but as Hubert did not return her wish to see him faded, and she began to think that it might be just as well if he stayed away, for, who knows? a wandering fellow like him might easily run out of his money and return to Morrison's Hotel to

borrow from her, and she wasn't going to give her money to be spent for the benefit of another woman. The other woman was Hubert's wife. If Hubert came back he might threaten to publish her secret if she didn't give him money to keep it. An ugly thought, of which she was ashamed and which she tried to keep out of her mind. But as time went on a dread of Hubert took possession of her. After all, Hubert knew her secret, and somehow it didn't occur to her that in betraying her secret Hubert would be betraying his own. Albert didn't think as clearly as she used to; and one day she answered Mrs. Baker in a manner that Mrs. Baker did not like. Whilst speaking to Albert the thought crossed Mrs. Baker's mind that it was a long while since they had seen the painter. I cannot think, she said, what has become of Hubert Page; we've not had news of him for a long time; have you heard from him, Albert? Why should you think, ma'am, that I hear from him? I only asked, Mrs. Baker replied, and she heard Albert grumbling something about a wandering fellow, and the tone in which the words were spoken was disrespectful, and Mrs. Baker began to consider Albert; and though a better servant now than he had ever been in some respects, he had developed a fault which she didn't like, a way of hanging round the visitor as he was preparing to leave the hotel that almost amounted to persecution. Worse than that, a rumour had reached her that Albert's service was measured according to the tip he expected to receive. She didn't believe it, but if it were true she would not hesitate to have him out of the hotel in spite of the many years he had spent with them. Another thing: Albert was liked, but not by everybody. The little red-headed boy on the second floor told me, Mrs. Baker said (her thoughts returning to last Sunday, when she had taken the child out to Bray), that he was afraid of Albert, and he confided to me that Albert had

tried to pick him up and kiss him. Why can't he leave the child alone? Can't he see the child doesn't like him?

But the Bakers were kind-hearted proprietors, and could not keep sentiment out of their business, and Albert remained at Morrison's Hotel till she died.

An easy death I hope it was, your honour, for if any poor creature deserved an easy one it was Albert herself. You think so, Alec, meaning that the disappointed man suffers less at parting with this world than the happy one? Maybe you're right. That is as it may be, your honour, he answered, and I told him that Albert awoke one morning hardly able to breathe, and returned to bed and lay there almost speechless till the maidservant came to make the bed. She ran off again to fetch a cup of tea, and after sipping it Albert said that she felt better. But she never roused completely, and the maidservant who came up in the evening with a bowl of soup did not press her to try to eat it, for it was plain that Albert could not eat or drink, and it was almost plain that she was dying, but the maidservant did not like to alarm the hotel and contented herself with saying: he'd better see the doctor to-morrow. She was up betimes in the morning and on going to Albert's room she found the waiter asleep, breathing heavily. An hour later Albert was dead, and everybody was asking how a man who was in good health on Tuesday could be a corpse on Thursday morning, as if such a thing had never happened before. However often it had happened, it did not seem natural, and it was whispered that Albert might have made away with himself. Some spoke of apoplexy, but apoplexy in a long, thin man is not usual; and when the doctor came down his report that Albert was a woman put all thought of the cause of death out of everybody's mind. Never before or since was Morrison's Hotel agog as it was that morning, everybody asking the other why Albert had

chosen to pass herself off as a man, and how she had succeeded in doing this year after year without any one of them suspecting her. She would be getting better wages as a man than as a woman, somebody said, but nobody cared to discuss the wages question; all knew that a man is better paid than a woman.

But what Albert would have done with Helen if Helen hadn't gone off with Joe Mackins stirred everybody's imagination. What would have happened on the wedding night? Nothing, of course; but how would she have let on? The men giggled over their glasses, and the women pondered over their cups of tea; the men asked the women and the women asked the men, and the interest in the subject had not quite died down when Hubert Page returned to Morrison's Hotel, in the spring of the year, with her paint pots and brushes. How is Albert Nobbs? was one of her first inquiries, and it fired the train. Albert Nobbs! Don't you know? How should I know? Hubert Page replied. I've only just come back to Dublin. What is there to know? Don't you ever read the papers? Read the papers? Hubert repeated. Then you haven't heard that Albert Nobbs is dead? No, I hadn't heard of it. I'm sorry for him, but after all, men die; there's nothing wonderful in that, is there? No; but if you had read the papers you'd have learnt that Albert Nobbs wasn't a man at all. Albert Nobbs was a woman. Albert Nobbs a woman! Hubert replied, putting as much surprise as she could into her voice. So you never heard? And the story began to pour out from different sides, everybody striving to communicate it to her, until at last she said: if you all speak together, I shall never understand it. Albert Nobbs a woman! A woman as much as you're a man, was the answer, and the story of her courtship with Helen, and Helen's preference for Joe Mackins and Albert's grief at Helen's treatment of him

trickled into a long relation. The biggest deception in the whole world, a scullion cried from his saucepans. Whatever would she have done with Helen if they had married? But the question had been asked so often that it fell flat. So Helen went away with Joe Mackins? Hubert said. Yes; and they don't seem to get on over well together. Serve her right for her unkindness, cried a kitchen-maid. But after all, you wouldn't want her to marry a woman? a scullion answered. Of course not; of course not. The story was taken up by another voice, and the hundreds of pounds that Albert had left behind in many securities were multiplied; nearly a hundred in ready money rolled up in paper, half-crowns, half-sovereigns and sovereigns in his bedroom; his bedroom—her bedroom, I mean; but we're so used to thinking of her as a him that we find it difficult to say her; we're always catching each other up. But what I'm thinking of, said a waiter, is the waste of all that money. A great scoop it was for the Government, eight hundred pounds. The pair were to have bought a shop and lived together, Mr. Page, Annie Watts rapped out, and when the discussion was carried from the kitchen upstairs to the second floor: true for you, said Dorothy, now you mention it, I remember, it's you that should be knowing better than anybody else, Mr. Page, what Albert's sex was like. Didn't you sleep with her? I fell asleep the moment my head was on the pillow, Page answered, for if you remember rightly I was that tired Mrs. Baker hadn't the heart to turn me out of the hotel. I'd been working ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day, and when he took me up to his room I just tore off my clothes and fell asleep and went away in the morning before he was awake. Isn't it wonderful? A woman, Hubert continued, and a minx in the bargain, and an artful minx if ever there was one in the world, and there have been a good many.

And now, ladies, I must be about my work. I wonder what Annie Watts was thinking of when she stood looking into my eyes; does she suspect me? Hubert asked herself as she sat on her derrick. And what a piece of bad luck that I shouldn't have found him alive when I returned to Dublin.

You see Alec, this is how it was. Polly, that was Hubert's wife, died six months before Albert; and Hubert had been thinking ever since of going into partnership with Albert. In fact Hubert had been thinking about a shop, like Albert, saying to herself almost every day after the death of her wife: Albert and I might set up together. But it was not until she lay in bed that she fell to thinking the matter out, saying to herself: one of us would have had to give up our job to attend to it. The shop was Albert's idea more than mine, so perhaps she'd have given up waiting, which would not have suited me, for I'm tired of going up these ladders. My head isn't altogether as steady as it used to be; swinging about on a derrick isn't suited to women. So perhaps it's as well that things have fallen out as they have. Hubert turned herself over, but sleep was far from her, and she lay a long time thinking of everything and of nothing in particular, as we all do in our beds, with this thought often uppermost: I wonder what is going to be the end of my life. What new chance do the years hold for me?

And of what would Hubert be thinking, and she a married woman? Of what else should she be thinking but of her husband, who might now be a different man from the one she left behind. Fifteen years, she said, makes a great difference in all of us, and perhaps it was the words, fifteen years, that put the children she had left behind her back into her thought. I wouldn't be saying that she hadn't been thinking of them, off and on, in the years gone by, but the thought of them was never such a

piercing thought as it was that night. She'd have liked to have jumped out of her bed and run away to them; and perhaps she would have done if she only knew where they were. But she didn't, so she had to keep to her bed; and she lay for an hour or more thinking of them as little children, and wondering what they were like now. Lily was five when she left home. She's a young woman, now. Agnes was only two. She is now seventeen, still a girl, Hubert said to herself; but Lily's looking round, thinking of young men, and the other won't be delaying much longer, for young women are much more wide-awake than they used to be in the old days. The rest of my life belongs to them. Their father could have looked after them till now; but now they are thinking of young men he won't be able to cope with them, and maybe he's wanting me too. Bill is forty, and at forty we begin to think of them as we knew them long ago. He must have often thought of me, perhaps oftener than I thought of him, and she was surprised to find that she had forgotten all Bill's ill usage, and remembered only the good time she had had with him. The rest of my life belongs to him, she said, and to the girls. But how am I to get back to him? how, indeed? . . . Bill may be dead; the children too. But that isn't likely. I must get news of them somehow. The house is there, and lying in the darkness she recalled the pictures on the wall, the chairs that she had sat in, the coverlets on the beds, everything. Bill isn't a wanderer, she said; I'll find him in the same house if he isn't dead. And the children? Did they know anything about her? Had Bill spoken ill to them of her? She didn't think he would do that. But did they want to see her? Well, she could never find that out except by going to see. But how was she going to return home? Pack up her things and go dressed as a man to the house and, meeting Bill on the threshold, say; don't you know

me, Bill? and are you glad to see your mother back, children? No; that wouldn't do. She must return home as a woman, and none of them must know the life she had been living. But what story would she tell him? It would be difficult to tell the story of fifteen years, for fifteen years is a long time, and sooner or later they'd find out she was lying, for they would keep asking her questions.

But sure, said Alec, 'tis an easy story to tell. Well, Alec, what story should she tell them? In these parts, Alec said, a woman who left her husband and returned to him after fifteen years would say she was taken away by the fairies whilst wandering in a wood. Do you think she'd be believed? Why shouldn't she, your honour? A woman that marries another woman and lives happily with her, isn't a natural woman; there must be something of the fairy in her. But I could see it all happening as you told it, the maidservants and the serving-men going their own roads, and the only fault I've to find with the story is that you left out some of the best parts. I'd have liked to know what the husband said when she went back to him, and they separated all the years. If he liked her better than he did before, or less. And there's a fine story in the way the mother would be vexed by the two daughters and the husband, and they at her all the time with questions, and she hard set to find answers for them. But mayhap the best of all is when Albert began to think that it wouldn't do to have Joe Mackins hanging round, making their home his own, eating and drinking of the best, and when there was a quarrel he'd have a fine threat over them, as good as the Murrigan herself when she makes off of a night to the fair, whirling herself over the people's heads, stirring them up agin each other, making cakes of their skulls. I'm bet, fairly bet, crowed down to the Ballinrobe cock. And now, your honour, you heard the Angelus ringing, and my dinner is on the hob, but I'll be telling you what I think of the

story when I come back; but I'm thinking already 'tis the finest that ever came out of Ballinrobe, I am so.

CHAP. LIV.

ONE day Alec said, breaking a long silence: 'tis proud of you they must be in London for the great shanachie that you are; the greatest in all the world, I'm thinking. But maybe, he continued, interpreting my silence as a confession that London had not done justice to whatever small talent may be mine, they are passing you over for the bitter jealousy there is in England always of everything that comes out of old Ireland. And didn't they strip us of our lands and our laws, of our own language itself? and aren't all the old houses being emptied now of the fine furniture we made in Dublin? and the pictures and the silver spoons and dishes, all our handiwork, sold in London, bad cess to them? And aren't they still at the same old scheming, ferreting out our old stories, turning them all into rags and tatters, for not understanding the significance of anything in them? Isn't it the truth I'm telling your honour?

Before I could answer him, Alec began again: but you're a Mayo man like myself, and if you should think it worth your while to be writing out any of the stories I've been telling you, it is meself that will be the proud man, for it won't be taking back a pailful of potato skins you will be doing like the lady in Galway, but fine spuds in which there is a rich diet. Faith and troth that is why I have opened my mind to you, for I wouldn't have our old stories betrayed and destroyed any longer than I can help it. 'Tis the nature of stories to be travelling; always footing it one way or the other. So 'tis no use trying to keep them to ourselves, I know that, but I would like them to appear in their emigrations clean and tidy, just that, so that they may see over yonder

that we have a shanachie as good or better than their own. The stories you have told me, I said, are the gift of the shanachie of Westport to the shanachie of Ballinrobe. If your honour likes to think of it in that way, he answered, 'tis a great honour you're doing me by comparing me with yourself. Comparing myself with yourself? I rapped out. Why, Alec, we have been telling stories one against the other, and the best of the bunch is " The Nuns of Crith Gaille "; and by far. We will never be agreed about that, your honour. Well, more is the pity, I replied, and if we aren't agreed among ourselves I don't know how it is to be settled unless we ring the chapel bell and call a meeting with the priest in the chair.

At the word priest Alec's face turned grave, and it came into my mind that I was just about to lose the original Alec which it had taken me a fortnight to evoke. It wouldn't be fair, I said, for me to tell stories against you in your own parish, and the words had no sooner passed my lips than I regretted them. We should do well not to be talking about the priest at all, Alec said, for the clergy do not take kindly to hearing stories told against themselves, even if they be in the years back. And not another word could I get from him. He sat, as it were, frozen in his meditations, and was not roused out of them till at last I said: there have been great shanachies in this world, Alec; greater than we. Now do you think there were any greater than yourself, your honour? I do, indeed, Alec, though I admire " The Nuns of Crith Gaille" more than any of my own stories. You'll be turning my head if you say any more about that story, he answered, and he asked me who were the world's great shanachies. Had I shaken hands with any of them? With one, I have. An Englishman? Alec interjected. No, Alec. The Englishman, to my thinking, isn't a story-teller at all. He tells of parsons and croquet lawns, and is home-sick when he leaves them. He tells a tea-party

well enough, and has a quick eye to spy out the difference between one woman's talk and another; whether she visits the big houses and if she has the talk of the gentry tripping on her tongue. But there is no diet in the Englishman's stories, if I may borrow one of your own expressive phrases. But there was a great shanachie over in France in the years back. Was there now? Alec interjected. There has been one, troth and faith, I answered, one that overtops all the others, wherever you may go looking for them. Now, your honour, Alec cried, you will be delighting me, begob you will, by telling me something about the great shanachie. Balzac, I said. But no sooner was the name out of my mouth than I began to regret having mentioned him, for it is difficult to pick a story out of the great Human Comedy that would appeal to an imaginative uneducated fellow and of all something that could be related on a June morning in a sunny wood by an old deserted mill.

But Alec was intent to hear one of Balzac's stories from me, and as an earnest of Balzac's originality I began to tell a half-remembered, half-forgotten story of a son that acted as executioner to his family, striking off their heads, one after the other; besought, Alec, by every one of them to be brave and to strike firmly and straight. You must know that it fell out in Spain, when the Spaniards who had been conquered by the French were conspiring to rid themselves of their conquerors, and to do this it behoved him on whomsoever the lot should fall to kill the sentry; the family are watching from a window: death if he fails. The cry of a bird, some vague sound attracts the sentry; he turns; all is lost. The Spaniard is seized. The French general is a man of iron, and to make an end of the conspiracies that were always hatching he decides that not only the spy must be beheaded, but the entire family. The blotting out of an ancient lineage, one that was before the Arabs conquered Spain, is not easily apprehended by

us. A Spaniard alone could appreciate the father's despair. All the same I think I understand, Alec said, and I gathered from his tone he was already interested in the story. The father beseeches, he begs that one member may be spared to continue the name—he asks for the life of his youngest son—that is all; if he could be spared, the rest don't matter; for individual death is nothing to a Spaniard; the name everything, and the family I am telling was, as I have said, before the Arabs; maybe fifty generations had come and gone. The general, I have related, is a man of iron. Yes, one member of your family shall be respited, he answers, but on one condition. To the agonised family, conditions are as nothing. But they don't know that the man of iron is determined to make a terrible example, one that will make an end of Spanish conspiracy, and they cry: any conditions. He who is respited must serve as executioner to the others. Great is the price; but the name must be saved at all costs, and in the family council the father goes to his son and says: I have been a good father to you, my son; I have always been a kind father, have I not? Answer me that. You will not fail us; you will prove yourself worthy of your great ancestor who defeated the Arabs, remember! The mother goes to her son and says: my son, I have been a good mother, I have always loved you; you will not desert us in this hour of great need. The little sister goes to him. One by one the whole family goes to him and they kneel down and beg him to save the family from death. He will not prove himself unworthy of our name, they cry; and on the fatal morning the father says: take the axe firmly, do what I ask you; courage, and strike straight. The father's head falls into the sawdust, the blood all over the white beard. Then comes the elder brother, and then another brother; and then the little sister. She is almost more than he can bear, and his mother has to whisper: remember your promise to your

dead father. Therefore he strikes off his sister's head; his mother lays her head on the block, but he cannot kill his mother. Be not the first coward of our name! Strike; remember your promise to us all. Her head is struck off. The family is saved——

And the son, Alec asked, what became of him? He was never seen, Alec, save at night, walking, a solitary man, beneath the walls of his castle in Granada. And he never married? You've guessed rightly, Alec. He never married. 'Tis a great story surely, Alec muttered. We walked a few yards in silence, and finding a comfortable bank to lie upon under the tall trees overhanging the torrent, I related some of the droll stories, causing Alec to chuckle, but only languidly. He prefers his own, I said to myself, and we passed on to the war stories, and he liked *Adieu,* and seemed to understand the pathetic figure of the retired tradesman who lived in a garret so that his daughters might make rich marriages and shine in society; and I might have heard the story of an Irish Lear from him if I had not been eager to tell another Balzac.

But Balzac, although appreciated by Alec, did not capture his imagination as the Russian writers did. Dostoieffsky discovered horizons more lurid. Tolstoy's moralities, I said to myself, are not easy to deal with, and I passed on to Tchertkoff, who pleased him, and in much the same way as he pleases me. I longed to speak of Tourguéneff but dared not, afraid that the delicate rhythms and almost pallid beauty of his stories would escape a rustic ear and eye. In this I was mistaken; for every one of the Tales of a Sportman was understood, and the Dream Tales, who would have thought it, were a grand success. It was while telling one of these that we passed out of the wood on to the terraced walk overlooking the park, our eyes fixed; I say our eyes, for so beautiful was the airy prospect that it was impossible for me to think that even Alec who had been watching it all his

life, could keep his eyes from the mountain range above the town—hills rising one above the other, buttressing Croagh Patrick, leaving the perfect outlines of the peak showing against a brilliant sky with the shadowy outlines of the Connemara hills far away, shadowy and far away as the tales that I had just been relating.

At the end of a long silence, Alec said: was this the great shanachie your honour shook hands with? Yes, Alec, that was the one. And I told him how I had seen this great man in the gardens of the Élysée Montmartre. Public gardens, I said, in which a band plays, and the people dance in the open air under the trees, if it be fine, and in a ballroom if the weather be wet. So it must have been wet on the occasion that I saw this great man, for he was walking down the ballroom, a great man and a big one as well—as big as Maliche Daly, standing six feet four at least, and with a head on him as white as Croagh Patrick's peak after a fall of snow, upright as a tree, and a walk on him like a stag: a noble, knowledgeable man, one that had lived a long time in the world, but standing apart like a mountain among hills. Like the peak, your honour, said Alec. Just so, I see you understand him: and his stories, too, are as beautiful in outline as the hills, sometimes a little dimmer, like—— Like the Connemara hills in the gap beyond, Alec interrupted, and I answered, precisely, I see you understand. Did he speak to your honour? Alec asked. He was kind enough to speak to me, though I was but a boy in those days; and I told Alec that the great shanachie's words had remained with me all my life, so wise did they seem; but as they were spoken in the French language, and about books that Alec had not read, it would be useless for me to try to translate the shanachie's wisdom. Alec accepted my judgment as to what could be told and what should be left out of a narrative, and asked me which was the greater of the two, Tourguéneff or Dostoieffsky. My

vote was given long ago to Tourguéneff, Alec; I plumped for him. And myself wouldn't be saying that there was anything amiss with that plump, Alec returned. But would it be asking too much if I were to ask you to tell me what t'other was like? I never saw Dostoieffsky in the flesh, but in the portraits that they publish in his books he appears like an unhappy, almost afflicted man from the working classes. There is a good deal of Tartar blood in Russia, and Dostoieffsky's flat, shallow face, with insignificant features and eyes turned up at the corners, recall the Tartar of Chinese type, and were it not for the agitated eyes no one would suspect he was looking at the portrait of a great man. But the agitated eyes tell that something awful had happened to him, and something very awful did happen to him in the beginning of his life; not many years after writing *Poor Folk,* the book we were talking about yesterday, he was on his way to the scaffold, on the scaffold maybe, when the reprieve came, altering the sentence of death to one of banishment to Siberia. His face in the portrait tells of an unfortunate man, one who was unlucky from the beginning; an epileptic he was, and his life was lived in great poverty; in such poverty, Alec, that there was no time for him to read over his manuscripts before they went to the printer. Tourguéneff admired his genius—— Were they friends? Alec rapped out. They must have known each other, but they couldn't be friends, for they were too different, coming from different classes, and out of a different tradition. Nor were they even of the same race, I muttered. Two great men writing prose narrative in the same language, that was all. There are stories going about, Alec, of a strange visit that Dostoieffsky paid to Tourguéneff. Dostoieffsky had come to Paris once to arrange for the publication of his works in a French translation, and it is said, mind you, I don't vouch for the truth of the story, but it has got about that one evening, overtaken by his conscience, he rushed off to

Tourguéneff to confess a crime he had committed years ago in Moscow. There being no priest handy, I suppose? Alec interjected. I'm afraid neither of them set much store on priests, I replied; but even those who do not believe in priests like to unburden themselves sometimes; a man who has committed a crime cannot keep his secret always; a secret will out, as you've often heard, Alec. I've heard, Alec said, that murder will out. A much worse crime than many murders was the crime that compelled him to seek out Tourguéneff in Paris. You must know, Alec, that houses in Paris are very big; and on every storey there are as many rooms as in a whole house here. I suppose that this plan was adopted with a view to fewer servants, for there is no going up and down stairs in a flat; the rooms open one into the other, and Tourguéneff had come through the folding doors from the dining-room into a white-painted, low-ceilinged saloon, which would have seemed somewhat finicky to Dostoieffsky if he had had eyes to see the great silk curtains and beautifully bound books. There were comely little book-cases hanging from the walls and standing in corners, filled with choice volumes which could not have failed to attract anybody except a somnambulist, somebody walking in a dream, and that was how Dostoieffsky came into the room: like one in a trance. He knew Tourguéneff was there, and that's about all—Tourguéneff only concerning him. He was not aware of the hour, which, as I have said, was an hour after dinner, somewhere about nine o'clock. He was not aware that Tourguéneff was busy; nor of the embarrassment his name created when the servant announced it: only aware of the torture he experienced in the few minutes he had been kept waiting in the ante-room. For every moment in that room was terrible till the moment came for him to unburden his conscience of the crime committed in Moscow years and years ago. Remorse, he said, has got hold of me now as it never did

before, and he stood looking at Tourguéneff, hardly seeing him at all; Vera's face, the girl that had sent him, was much clearer to him. Didn't Tourguéneff offer him a chair or say something to him? Alec asked. Yes; Tourguéneff came forward with a chair, but Dostoieffsky waved him aside and walked up and down the room, finding a way through the furniture instinctively without falling over any chair or table, which was wonderful, for he seemed like a man without eyes, and after a while he found his way back to where Tourguéneff was sitting. It was last night, he said: she was by me, and it was she who sent me hither. The dead have a strange power over us, and she is dead many years: ten years ago at least. It was at Moscow. One night, Ivan Sergeivitch—— Who is that one, Ivan Ser . . . vitch? Alec rapped out. Tourguéneff, I answered. Russians who are strangers address each other as son of—— Like the Irish Mac, Alec said, and I answered that it was so. And Tourguéneff would address Dostoieffsky as Theodore Mikhailovitch. 'Tis a terrible way of saying Mac, said Alec, and to escape further questions I repeated Dostoieffsky's last words. It was one night in Moscow, at the hub of the streets, I met her, after a long day's work, and so brain-weary was I that I could hardly see or hear when a girl's voice awoke me. I'm afraid I frightened you, the girl said. You startled me a little, I answered: but my appearance must have frightened you, my mind was far away. You're not even awake yet, she said. Oh, but I am, I answered, and we walked on together, myself listening to her story of herself, glad to listen to it, to anything that took me out of myself. She told me she wanted to learn English, and the only way, she said, is to get a situation in England. I'm after one, but I'm not certain that I shall be able to get it, for you see, I've no reference. And how is that? You seem a good little girl. I used to be, but I don't know that I am any longer. How did it come about? I

was looking, she said, after some children in a tradesman's family, and one day in the park a dog attacked the children, and all three might have been bitten if a student had not come forward and driven off the dog. We met again the next day and the next, and all might have gone on very well if one of the children hadn't walked into the pond after his boat, and when I was asked to explain how I was not by to prevent him doing such a foolish thing, one of the children answered: Vera was talking with the student who drove the dog off. The student returned again and again, and the upshot of it all was that I lost my situation, being deemed, so it was said, unfit to look after children. As I was in love with Ivan and he with me, I went to live with him, and when he left Moscow I took on with his friend, a Roumanian. And what then? I asked. When he left there was another and then another. And then? And then, she said, I found myself obliged to go out into the thoroughfare to find somebody to whom I might take a fancy and who might take a fancy to me. As it happened to-night, if we have taken a fancy to each other. But I've been out here once before; my word on it; and I assured her that I believed what she had told me, though it seemed to me to matter very little whether she had given herself to three men or to four, for money or caprice.

She had a pretty face and an engaging manner, and every word she spoke revealed a beautiful mind that circumstances could not defile. Now what have you been doing? she said, to change the subject, which was becoming a bit irksome to both of us, and I told her that I was a man who wrote stories for a living, and had come out to escape from the people of my imagination. But why do wish to forget them? I would forget them, I said, to-night, so that I may remember them better to-morrow, and I'm grateful to you for speaking to me, for if it hadn't been for this little talk with you, perhaps I

shouldn't have closed my eyes to-night. And to-morrow will be a day of twelve or fourteen hours. Must you work as hard as that? I must, indeed, for I have no money except the few roubles that publishers pay me for my stories. And I don't know if life will ever become any easier. You see I've only just returned from Siberia: I worked in chains for five years, because I wished to free the people from the police. So you're a convict, I heard her say, and I expected her to drop behind. I don't mind that, she said, for it was for having a better heart than another the police were down on you. Perhaps you're right, I answered, but I thought it well to tell you whom I am, for it may do you harm to be seen walking with an ex-convict. I'm not afraid of that, and I saw that my confession, instead of estranging us, as I had intended, seemed to unite us, which is only natural; the outcast only can speak intimately with the outcast. We walked on, discovering ourselves one to the other, and when I stopped to bid her good-bye it seemed to both of us that for a night at least we were destined for each other. It was then that I began to look her over, and her clothes, her accent, told me she was a workgirl, the typical workgirl of Moscow, and, I said, she has told me the truth; she has been a nursery-maid and needs money, and I've none to give her. You need money, I said, and in coming with me you are leaving money behind you. Never mind; I would sooner go hungry to-morrow than lose you to-night. But I have some money, very little it is true, so little, that if I were to call that cab I should be ashamed to offer you what remained. We can walk, she answered, and it was not till we were fairly out of the city that her legs began to ache. Let us rest awhile, she said. I shall be able to go on presently. But your lodgings are not very far off, she replied, her eyes fixed on the last cab on the last rank. But I'm dead-tired, and it wouldn't cost much to ride the rest of the way; it isn't more than

half-a-mile. It's lucky it isn't more, I answered, for the last cab looks as if it had already accomplished its last journey. The horse too, Vera said, is near his end; his head is sunk between his forelegs; and it was with a view to shortening his journey by a few yards that we crossed the road. An absurd thought, I remarked, and Vera agreed that the extra yards could not make much difference, but like me she felt she must save the horse from the labour of dragging the cab across the street. And when we were in the middle of the road the horse fell suddenly. He'll get up when I've loosened the traces and drawn away the cab, the driver muttered, as he bent over the harness. He plied the whip, but the horse was dead, and we turned away, frightened, myself wondering if we should accept the horse's death as a warning, as an omen. I think even little Vera was frightened, moved by the untoward occurrence, but at fifteen one isn't given to the reading of omens. You see she was only a child, and I listened to her prattle, my thoughts wandering between the magnitude of the universe and the accident that had forced this long walk upon us, robbing me, perhaps, of the love night that I looked forward to so greedily. She will be too tired, I said, and that was all I thought about: whether she would be too tired for love.

Vera, I'm trying to confess all. Have patience. Have I not come to him to whom thou didst send me? Am I not telling all? Thou knowest that I am concealing nothing, not even the shameful lust that entered my heart, when I heard thee say, with a smothered burst of laughter, that the last candle-end had been burnt out and we should have to undress in the dark. I had looked forward to seeing thee unpin thy pins, and untie thy bows, revealing each delicate form of thy body to me, and so great was my disappointment that there was no candle that I confided my disappointment to thee, and having thought only

for my pleasure, the curtain was drawn; it was thy hands that drew it, letting the moonlight into the room.

I can see her still. Certain parts of her are before my eyes, and her talk is ringing in my ears, and will ring in them forever. We may escape from the living but the dead never relax their clutch, and it is more often a dead hand than a living one that urges a man to his doom. After all, did she not love me? But did I love her? How could one such as I love her? To love one must have leisure, and there was none in my life. For bare life I had to sit at a writing-table for ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day, and the police are always at the heels of an ex-convict. My life was beset with difficulties, and as she strove to detain me, her hand on the lapel of my coat, I began to regret that we had met each other, for I foresaw the necessity of breaking with her. When shall we meet again? she asked, in her simplicity. When shall we meet again? I repeated, almost ironically. Have I not told you, I said, folding her in my arms, that I am a penniless convict from Siberia? Why should you wish to see me again? That I do not know, she replied, but do let me come to see you; I promise I won't disturb you while you're writing. I'll sit in a corner very quiet, reading the pages as you throw them aside. I could see the tears trembling on her eyelids, ready to flow over them. But my life was so dark, without a gleam in it at that time (it has always been dark, a hopeless life), that I did not dare to invite her into a danger which I knew was preparing. I cannot, I said: I'm a convict; the police are always watching me. You're a child, and—— If you're afraid to let me come to see you, tell me where you walk in the evenings, and, not foreseeing that we should ever run up against each other in the Nikolskaya, I told her that I walked there nearly every evening, and bade her good-bye, going back to my garret, thinking, not

of her, but of the work that would have to be accomplished before the sun set again.

My work left me too tired to go out, and the next day was the same, and the day after; but after several days of work there came a swimming in my head, and I went out to get the air, and to try to forget the people my pen had been calling into life all day. It is necessary to forget them sometimes so that we may not forget them when the times comes for work again. The very first thing that night was Vera looking into the faces of the passengers, and turning away from them, as soon as she had scanned them, seeking somebody whom she could not find, looking into their faces and turning away again. She is seeking me, I said, and passed up a side street, thinking to escape, for the sense that she was a danger to me was stronger than ever. We're a mutual danger, I said to myself, and perhaps it was the sense that she was a danger to me that drew me to her next day, for I walked out into the Nikolskaya, asking myself if she was still looking for me. She was there, and I saw her, as before, looking into the faces of the passengers, turning away from them, refusing many men who came and solicited her. She is refusing them, I said, because I am upon her mind. My misfortunes have attracted her. And then I began to argue with myself, asking myself: what imagined doom can there be for us? A girl like any other girl, and, I repeated, a man like any other man, but when I uttered these words I knew I was speaking a lie. For I'm not like any other; and, my thoughts travelling over my past life, I sought to discover if I were as different as I imagined myself to be, but after scanning the terrible history that every year unfolded, I closed the book, frightened, and fell to thinking of Vera. A thirst was upon me to see her; it was not the thirst for her body, not altogether, but the thirst for companionship: my life was lonely, lonlier than it had ever been in Siberia. I reasoned

with myself. I said: I must bear with myself, I am done for, but let me not drag her down with me. And I swear that I kept myself for days and weeks from turning into the Nikolskaya lest we should meet. But at last the day came when I began to feel that my dreams were becoming me, and the hallucinations of my people mine. I began to fear my people as one fears spectres. I must escape from them, I cried, else I shall not be able to recall them again. . . . If I do not drive them away to-night they may refuse to obey me to-morrow.

And as I jostled through the crowds, neither hearing nor seeing, a voice awoke me suddenly. It was Vera. So I have found you at last, she said. Why haven't you walked here before? I looked into her eyes without speaking. Aren't you glad to see me? she said. Yes, I'm glad to see you, I answered, but my mind is away, and I neither see the people about me nor have I any mind left to understand what is being said to me. You'll be better presently, she answered. Let us walk on together. Your mind will return to you presently. But if you work so hard you will kill yourself, and then what shall I do? The word touched my heart and I awoke from my dreams of a bastard son, an epileptic like myself; one that had committed a murder and had forgotten it—Smerdyakov.

I am myself again, I said, and remembering at the same moment that I had money in my pocket, having sold some manuscript, I said: let us go into an eating-house and have some supper. I should be very glad, she answered, for I'm hungry. You haven't eaten to-day? and she answered: I have not. It was unwise for me to take her into an eating-house, for when she had eaten and drunk there was only one thing to do, to take her back into my garret, and after I did that, would I be strong enough to turn her out of it in the morning? I knew that I should not turn her out, for reason is not listened to in such moments. Were it listened to, the world would have

ceased long ago; it cannot check even the philosopher; we belong to ourselves, to our instincts and passions, and, forgetful of aught else, I listened to Vera, who said she would be the happiest girl in the world if I would share my garret with her; and we were happy for longer than I thought it possible that I could be happy—for nearly three months. But all the time Vera's golden ringlets and happy smiles were setting the tongues of enviers and rivals wagging, and the police are adepts at indirect means of compulsion. It may have been the police and it may not have been the police, but objections to my work began to arise. I lost some of my customers, and feared that I should lose more. It was not an imaginary persecution, I swear it. Every day it became more intense and determined, till the old fear awoke in me, and my thoughts began to talk to me again, saying that I had dragged this poor child into a whirlpool of misfortune, for you are that and nothing more, my thoughts muttered. And I yielded to the belief that my life in the world would drag on as it had begun, in disaster. Vera, I said, I am as a leper; you would do well to leave me. Do you care for me no longer? she asked. And there was no strength in me to answer her: Vera, we have had the time of our life together; be wise and leave me, for I can only bring misfortune to you. Had I spoken these words she would not have understood them. She might have said: you're talking to me now as the people talk in your books. So I said nothing. She asked me of what I was thinking. Of you, darling, I said, but I was really thinking, though I did not dare to tell her, that it were better that she should return to the streets than remain with me, for on the streets she might meet any evening an honest fellow who would be tempted at first by her child beauty and learn to appreciate her gentle nature and marry her. Many men marry off the streets. Every good girl who goes on the street marries; we must believe that goodness

rises above prejudices and conventions. But to remain with me would be certain ruin for her; we had entered the danger zone. We had been together three months, and after three months the flesh wearies a little. It may be that I am wronging myself and that it was the persecution of the police that forced me to persecute Vera. Persecution begets persecution, and every day the desire to get rid of her became more intense. I counted her steps as she descended the stairs, saying: she is farther from me than she was a moment ago. Something had to happen. Oh, it wasn't murder. I should never had had the strength to murder, I couldn't walk upon a fly on the ground, but it would have been better if I had murdered her, for she would have suffered less at the time, and I should not have had to come here with a tale of cruelty: determined, premeditated cruelty, intended to drive her away. She never got a kind look or word from me, till I told her one day that she must leave me to earn my living; and you would do well, I added, to be about earning yours. She made no answer but left my rooms without a word, and I continued to write, for ten thousand words had to be written that day; they had been promised, and when the last sentence was upon paper, I stood asking myself if I should have sufficient mind to address the envelope correctly that was to contain the pages. It seemed as if the racket in my brain would never cease, and I said to myself: I cannot direct the envelope. But if the pages do not go now, they will be laid aside, I continued, and it was while waiting for a moment of mental calm to address the envelope that I heard her feet on the staircase. She will be here in a moment, I said, and I cannot look her in the face after my cruel words. I'll go out. I may be able to steal away. But when I return I shall find her waiting for me. There was no time to think more. I listened, sitting quite still, so that she might not hear me. The rooms in which we lived were divided by a parti-

tion, so that I could not move without her hearing me, so I sat very still, saying to myself: she thinks I am out. At last I heard something drop, and what sounded like a coil of rope—a rope drops differently from any other object, and when I heard her pick up the rope, I said: she has bought a rope to hang herself. But, I said to myself, if she means to hang herself, she will open the door to see if I'm out, and the thought relieved my mind. At the sight of her face all misunderstandings will be wiped away; we shall fall into each other's arms more truly in love than we had ever been. . . .

But she has drawn a chair forward and is going to step from the chair on to the table, I said, and when on the table she will attach the rope—to what? I asked myself, and tried to remember if there was a pole above the window to which she could attach it. But I could no longer think clearly. My thoughts slipped away as thoughts do in a dream, and just as the dreamer says: I'm dreaming, I too began to think I was dreaming. It must be only a dream, I said, and a little time went by. She is writing a letter, I said, giving the reason for her suicide, and I became strangely curious, asking myself what reasons she would assign, and if she would find the right words. I must have lost consciousness, if not for long, for some moments, for I remember a table being kicked aside. She has hanged herself, I said, and if I do not strive to shake off this lethargy, and run to her and cut her down, she will die and I shall be responsible. I cannot tell how complete or how partial my possession of myself was at the time. There are moments in every man's life in which he is not himself, in which he loses possession of his free will, if there be such a thing as free will. Be this as it may, I could not move from my chair. I must hasten, I said, lest I be too late, but I could not move, and then the song began to sing in my ears: her death will loosen her clutch upon my life, and in spite

of my efforts to rouse myself the time went by. I do not know how it went, and when I awoke, for I felt that I must have lost consciousness, I said: she is dead, it is all over, and dipping the pen into the ink, I addressed the envelope and walked to the office of the newspaper and handed in my copy.

I said just now there was an interval between the tying of the rope and the moment when she kicked the table aside, and that interval was occupied in writing a letter. That is so. She wrote a letter before hanging herself, explaining her suicide. The porter came upstairs, and the police came, and she was carried away, and buried, and disappeared from every human mind except mine. But in my mind she persists, becoming every day clearer, more distinct, and more authoritative. I feel her behind me in the streets; I wake up in the night and see her in the darkness; and last night she bade me go to you: thou must go to Ivan Sergeivitch, she said, and tell him all; and I believe she sent me to you, that I might get peace from her memory. But it would seem that the dead do not know all, for you have listened, not as she thought you would listen, but as I knew you would listen, without pity, almost with contempt. You are incapable, Ivan Sergeivitch, of a noble action, or of a noble thought except when you are interpreting the souls that your imagination reveals to you. You're not a Russian but a Greek—a Greek from the Crimea; and all the while I have been telling you my story you have been judging me. . . . True that I came for judgment, but the sympathy of a Russian Mujik would have served me better; you have submitted me to the test of reason, saying: repentance is a word without meaning to the philosopher, and confession disgraceful and unworthy of man. Why did I come here? Did I not foresee all this? Vera sent me, and I did not dare to disobey her. She said

that I must unburden my conscience to you else I should have no peace. Why did she send me? She sent me to you, Ivan Sergeivitch, that I might learn from you that there is a worse criminal than I. You, sitting in your palace of art, waiting for me to leave you, saying: how much longer will he keep me from my manuscript, a manuscript in which, no doubt, a nightingale in a wood hard by is singing her honied song while a heart yearns in a shadowy saloon, like this one. Rich furniture, vases, pictures. Very sordid and disgraceful my life must seem to you. But I would not exchange mine for yours.

Cold-hearted sentimentalist, were Dostoieffsky's last words, and upon them he dashed into the ante-room, and Tourguéneff heard the clink of the latch of the door that opened on to the staircase. And did Tourguéneff sit there letting the other fellow barge him for an hour without a word in his chops? The Murrigan should have been at him, leathering him all the way down the staircase to the very bottom and into the street. And what did Tourguéneff do then? I answered: he just dipped his pen in the ink and continued revising his manscript. Are you sure you've got the story right, your honour? And seeing that Alec was beginning to lean towards Dostoieffsky's view of Tourguéneff, I said: a man is not necessarily cold-hearted because he knows he cannot allay another's remorse. Remorse, Alec, must burn itself out.

CHAP. LV.

ALEC had gone away to his tea, and I sat thinking of the talk we had had together, for it seems strange that a man who could understand a story could not appreciate Tourguéneff's point of view that passion and violence should be avoided as not being sufficiently representative of life, and as this was Tourguéneff's practice in his art

it would be vain to expect him to treat life differently. But such a comprehension of life is reached only by the philosopher, and Alec is without philosophy. The Celt ever was and ever will be, mayhap, evolution having ceased, at least among men; and immersed in the thought of my country's failure, I sat gazing at the sun resting on the hill-side, and bethought myself of the quiet change that would come when the light had gone—a change within and without, I said, for the hawthorns in the park will lose their shadows, and my thoughts will become gentler, pulling on spiritual wings. I shall live for a little while detached from earthly life, as we shall live when this life is done with. Never, I continued, have I been so near as I am at this moment to what Christians call belief. If we live it will be in a twilight valley with a glow above the hills. A glow of what? I asked myself, and it was seemingly a voice from within that answered me: A glow of happy aspiration.

And it was in this mood that I walked towards my friend's house to meet him on the greensward, with simple, homely talk, for it is pleasant to enter into simple talk with a friend after moments of enthusiasm or ecstasy, pleasant it is to hear him say: the weather seems settled at last, and to see his goodwife coming from the garden laden with fruit and flowers, to hear the wheels of the pony-chaise, and to meet the young girls returning from the different ventures, a tennis-party or a picnic on one of the islands in the Bay. Which? To watch the young rooks, not yet fully fledged, flopping among the high branches, waiting to receive food from their parents, and, having received it, to see them return to the nests for the night, in response to the impatient cawing of their parents.

It is always, I said, out of meditations of what always was, and is and ever shall be that the best and most

moving stories come, and my thoughts going back to the story that I told Alec, I said to myself: Tourguéneff was right to withhold words; his silence was better than absolution, for Dostoieffsky will seek to interpret his silence, and will be led towards peace as day is led towards night. Where have you left your new friend? my host asked, startling me out of my meditation. He is having his tea, I answered, and repeated the phrase, delighted by its homeliness. He is having his tea. Could a man be about any more useful business? He is having his tea, and no doubt devoutly, I said to myself, and my host asked me if I was going to see Alec to-morrow. He has been a delightful adventure, I replied, somewhat sententiously, but the adventure has come to an end, and it doesn't seem to me that anything will be gained by continuing it.

Another story from him or myself I could not bear, and to escape from Alec for the next few days I remained indoors till the news came up from the town that he had left Westport, and was not expected back for a week. He is sometimes away for weeks at a time, my host said. I shall not await his return, I remarked—a remark that prompted my host to ask me if I were going to Moore Hall.

And after putting the question he stood by the fireplace pulling at a cigar, still uncertain that it was fully lighted. At last a huge puff of smoke cleared his doubts away, and he turned out of the billiard-room, thinking, perhaps, that I should be left to my memories of the great square Georgian house, one of those built at the end of the eighteenth century in Ireland, atop of a high flight of stairs, atop of a pleasant green hill with woods stretching right and left down to the shore of a lake flowing round headlands, past islands, and finding a passage between the great oak wood of Derinrush and the Partry shore, widening out in front of the great feudal fortresses of Castle

Carra and Castle Burke into what is almost another lake, passing round Church Island, and ending in a great snipe marsh under the walls of the old Abbey of Ballintubber, built by Roderick, King of Connaught, shall we say in the thirteenth century; a crescent-shapen lake with Moore Hall at one end of the crescent and Ballintubber at the other—a lake on whose every shore is a ruin, an ancient castle, a burnt or an abandoned house. Even the lake's islands were once strongholds, and we dream of these defended fiercely against boat-loads of pursuers till portcullis and drawbridge came to be forbidden in Ireland, and later-day chieftains deserted the strongholds of their ancestors for manor houses, retaining their vassals under the name of tenantry, the village supplying the big house with hewers of wood, drawers of water, ploughmen, reapers, gardeners, gamekeepers, huntsmen, jockeys, maidservants, menservants, even mistresses.

As late as the sixties the Georgian house killed its own mutton and beef, baked its own bread, brewed its own beer, and the last brewer at Moore Hall was John Malowney; his wife, Mary Macdonald that was, and her sister, Betty Macdonald, were cook and housemaid. These Macdonalds were probably the descendants of former chieftains, and the original owners of some of the lands my great-grandfather purchased when he returned from Spain. Whilom chieftains descend into the service of landlords, and the new landlords fought duels, there being no castles to besiege! The Irish castle flourished if the cattle-raiders returned with numerous beeves, and the Georgian house if the blood stock were speedy; it showed signs of declension as soon as the "crack" began to lift his leg when the back sinew was pressed after the morning gallop.

My father, who came of the Protestant ascendancy (a fact that must be borne in mind always—Irish Cath-

olics being worthless), rose at half-past six to see the horses gallop, though nothing else could persuade him out of his bed before ten. He was a good judge of a horse, given overmuch, it is true, to partial and unsatisfactory trials, but able to bring a horse fit and well to the post. Wolf Dog won a great many Queen's plates, Coranna, the Caezarewitch, just failing to get his head first past the post in the Caezarewitch. He cantered "home" in the Chester Cup, and this win kept Moore Hall out of the Encumbered Estate Courts. Croagh Patrick won the two cups at Goodwood, and Master George all his races till the suspensory ligaments began to swell. I remember the day my father came up from the stables, with the evil news on his face, and his valet, who was fussing about the hall chairs with one of my father's silk hats in his hands (in those days men did not go to the stables except in silk hat and gloves), confided to me in the pantry afterwards that he was afraid Master George's forelegs must have shown some slight puffiness. We shall have the veterinary surgeon down here with his irons. Don't you believe in firing? Joseph did not answer. Back sinews and suspensory ligaments are treated differently in these days; how, I have no knowledge, but in the sixties firing was a great device, and Master George's forelegs were fired; and I believe it was the memory of this brutal remedy that made it so difficult to remain on his back when he was put into training again. Be this as it may, he had me off three times one morning. Slieve Carn was the last of the Moore Hall horses that showed "form," but he was too beautiful for a race-horse, "only a Harab," as the bookies used to say at Newmarket. His box is still there, and it was a sudden sight of this loose-box that incited me to try after Tom Ruttledge: no, Tom, I'm not going to Moore Hall. You'd better make sure that you don't want to go, he replied. . . .

I'm going down to the office, perhaps you'll tell me when I return.

It seemed unkind to refuse to spend a few days at Moore Hall, but it was impossible to commit myself definitely to the visit. If a visit there was to be it should come about naturally, and I told my host that I should try to come to a decision whether I should visit the house of my birth or go straight to Dublin in the train: I shall be able to come to a decision, I said, between Westport and Castlebar; not before. There's an excellent inn at Castlebar, and I can get all the food I shall require for a three days' visit. You will save yourself a great deal of trouble, my host replied, if you decide now what your journey is to be. I'll order a hamper to be packed for you. No, no, I replied; and invented on the spot some specious reasons for wishing to go to Castlebar by train. I should like to see the railway bridge again, I said, and half-an-hour after the tall arches that spanned the valley called forth my admiration once more, and I fell to thinking that if both ends of the bridge disappeared into the woods the bridge would be the most romantic in the dis-United Kingdom.

The eastern side of the valley should be planted, and while considering who should undertake this reforestation, the pretty shapes of the Westport hills came into view, beguiling my thoughts so completely with their pretty outlines that at Castlebar my mind was not yet made up whether I should proceed on my journey or drive to Moore Hall. The road from Castlebar is not a cheerful one; a certain long stretch of bog rose up in memory, and I began to think that it would suit me better to alight at the next station, at Balla. But the train did not stop at Balla and at Claremorris the station-master told me that I should not be able to get a car on account of the races.

How very unfortunate, I answered; I should have liked to have seen Moore Hall. I should have gone over in

Mr. Ruttledge's motor. That would have been better than a car, the station-master replied, and the guard blew his whistle.

CHAP. LVI.

BETWEEN Claremorris and Ballyhaunis there is nothing to attract the eye, and the people that entered my carriage and left it at Castlerea were of a class unknown in Mayo in its feudal days. It was vain to try to decipher the markings on the shells; the kind was unknown to me, and I returned to my own thoughts, remembering that when my mother lived at Moore Hall (which she did to the day of her death), she used to say, when I jumped off the car that brought me from the station: why that gloom upon your face, George? It would seem as if the sight of your own house is displeasing to you, and not wishing to distress her, I answered: you are mistaken, mother. I was thinking that more trees should have been planted to shut out the view of the lake. A frivolous answer truly, but the best I could find in those days for a singular aversion. Why should I feel diffident?—why should I feel shy, almost ashamed, among the old places? I often asked myself. Yet that is what I do feel, and unable to find a reason to account for a feeling that seemed inveterate in me, I fell to criticising the alterations that my father had made in the house, trying to persuade myself that it was these alterations that prevented me from feeling at home at Moore Hall. The one that provoked me the most was the raising of the roof some ten or a dozen feet for practical reasons, the beams no doubt having rotted under the low eighteenth-century roof. But I could not forget that the small green-mortared slates, like scales, were much more beautiful than the modern slates; large blue slates give a Georgian house the appearance of a lord mayor's mansion-house, and only look well on a high-pitched French roof. My father

substituted plate-glass windows for the small panes, with eyes in them, like grease spots on soup. . . . How lovely! and it was with such æsthetic reflections that I tried for many years to account for a strange aversion; as late as last year, I said, I walked up and down the platform at Athlone, seeking the reason why I was always diffident, shy, ill at east at Moore Hall; and feeling myself nearer to apprehending a reason that had till now eluded me, I repeated the words: diffident, shy, ill at ease, ashamed, frightened, overcome by the awe that steals over one in the presence of the dead.

Moore Hall is a relic, a ruin, a corpse. Its life ceased when we left it in 1870, and I am one that has no liking for corpses. The wise man never looks on the face of a corpse, knowing well that if he does it will come between him and the living face. . . . That is why I am unwilling to go to Moore Hall, and why I avoid the Quartier St. Georges, and the two streets leading to the Boulevard Montmartre, the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, for these streets are so intensely my past life that I should feel shy and diffident, just as I feel at Moore Hall, in intruding myself on their presence. It would be painful for me to cross the Place Pigale and to enter the café in which I used to spend my evenings of long ago with Manet, with Degas, with Pissaroo, with Renoir, with Cabaner, with Alexis, with Duranty, with Mendès. I have heard that it is now the haunt of ponces and punks, and it is well that this place should descend into animal life, for life is always ascending and descending, and the ponces and punks that assemble there to-day would shock me less if I were to enter the café than a group of modern litterateurs discussing—ah, what do they discuss? is there anything left to discuss?

I turn aside from that café and would not enter the Rue Pigale if I could avoid doing so, for however fair the moon might shine it would not shine as fairly as it

did the night when I walked there with Mendès, turning to the right, making for the Rue Mansarde, where he lived with Augusta Holmes. Nor would I enter the Rue Amsterdam again, Manet forbids. Three years ago the mistress of a friend of mine asked me to dine with her, and I did not dare disclose the truth to her that I could not venture into the Rue Amsterdam. A shameful cowardice it was to accept her invitation, and my punishment began almost as soon as I crossed the threshold, and it continued all through dinner, for she lived in 73 Rue Amsterdam. Some sense of premonition propelled me at last to the window, and looking from it down into the deep courtyard I cried out: we are certainly in the house overlooking the courtyard in which Manet painted. She said: you must be mistaken, for I could not have missed hearing that so great a painter lived here once. But if you think that this house is the house, go to the concierge and ask him: which I did at once, you may be sure, and he said he had heard that a great painter once lived in the house. But that wall? I said. The wall, he answered, was built a few years ago. The courtyard is changed, I said; but is there a studio yonder? and he answered: yes, and showed me into the studio in which I had seen so many masterpieces painted, now, alas, an art class for young women.

Not another instant will I remain here! I cried; and I returned to my friend's mistress with these verses on my lips:

> Triste sous le baiser plaintif dont tu m'effleures,
> Oh! combien ton baiser de jadis m'est plus cher!
> Les choses du passé, ma sœur, sont les meilleures.

CHAP. LVII.

WE must love for the sake of our remembrance of the kiss we receive, but not for it, and of all, we must not

hesitate to resist whatever piercing longings rise up in us to return to the things that we loved long ago. The woman may be more beautiful and more intelligent than she was when we loved her; and the prospects that we remember are, perchance, more romantic to-day than they were when they stirred our imagination, but we must not try to return to them; we shall lose them if we do; but by our fireside we can possess them more intensely than when they were poor illusive actualities.

I can see my father more clearly to-day than I could when I was a child, shall we say, as he sat at the breakfast-table reading the newspaper, suddenly remembering the horses in the stable, and laying down the paper and going into the hall, picking up his silk hat and gloves, that a valet had carefully brushed and laid on the chair for him. I can hear him call to the red setter that has been waiting for him on the steps. I can see the great hay-ricks over against the stables and the old pine in which the gold-finches built their nests, and brighter than day now is the day when the old servant took me out one morning and showed me the nest up in a high bough. That high bough may not exist to-day; and if it hangs as it did in the sixties, it would not be as clear to me at Moore Hall as it is by my fireside in London. By my fireside in Ebury Street I can relive the delightful life of the sixties again, seeing everyone in his and her occupation, and every room unchanged, unaltered; my nursery with a print between window and door showing three wild riders leaping a wooden fence in a forest. The school-room overlooking the yard is before my eyes—the yard is in ruins but its homely life lives on—the old mule toiling always, bringing up water from the lake. The mule is dead, and my old governess, too, may be under the ground, but she lives in my memory and will live in it, becoming clearer day by day. It would be a misfortune

truly to meet her, for no longer would I be able to go with her for long walks beyond the domain out into the high-road, over Anney's bridge; through the long bog to the next bridge, and to discover a crayfish in the brook. It is a wonderful thing to see a crayfish and not to know it is a crayfish—and to remember Primrose and Ivory, two ponies dead fifty years or more, and the day—my mother drove me to Ballyglass to see the mail coach swing round the hill-side. The coachman held the reins grandly. The guard blew the horn. Why should I go to Ballyglass or to Lough Carra? The boat with sails made out of sheets stolen out of the linen presses lies rotten, or has utterly passed away.

But if Moore Hall lives in my mind completely and independently of the house that stands on the hill-top, why do I continue to refuse to accept my agent's advice to sell the timber? He says that a thousand pounds' worth of trees can be taken out of the woods without injury to them, and if he could see into my mind, he would add: the trees that are growing to-day are not the same trees that were your wont to climb in boyhood. In fifty years a tree changes, even as a man; for better or for worse, all things change. Why, therefore, should you hesitate to fell every tree on the hill-sides, to tear the lead from the roof, to leave Moore Hall a ruin like Castle Carra? Rid yourself of Moore Hall so that you may possess it more completely.

CHAP. LVIII.

THE train passes on through West Meath, and I am puzzled to find an answer to Tom Ruttledge's subtle reasoning, and am forced to plead an invincible repugnance to the felling of the trees, to the selling of furniture and pictures. No; I cannot, I cry, do what you

ask; to me the removal of a chair from one room to another is a pain: any change would hurt me almost as much as the selling of the lead coffins in which my forefathers are enclosed. But even if you succeed in preserving Moore Hall unchanged for a few years, says my agent, whom I have cast for the part of the tempter, Moore Hall will certainly fall into ruin. As soon as you have gone, the trees will be felled, and the lead taken from the roof; Moore Hall will be a ruin within a very few years; for not a great many years of life lie in front of you. A fact that cannot be gainsaid; yet for some reason hidden in me, and which I may not explore, I dare not order trees to be felled at Moore Hall. You forget, Tom, that everything came out of Moore Hall: if Moore Hall had not existed I should not have existed, not as I know myself to-day, for it was Moore Hall that enabled me to go to Paris, and to sit in the Nouvelle Athènes with Manet and with Degas; to gather a literary atmosphere from Hugo, Zola, Goncourt, Banville, Mendès —and Cabaner.

CHAP. LIX.

AS the train drew near to Mullingar, I said to myself: Moore Hall was built with Spanish gold, and it was the peasants around the house, and the peasants of Ballintubber, and several other properties that enabled me to go to Paris. It is therefore to Patsy Murphy that the Carra edition of my writings should be dedicated. A strange dedication it would seem to my readers, but if justice were weighed out evenly the Carra edition should go to Patsy Murphy, but in this world we do not get the things that are due to us; in Ireland things always take a crooked turn, and instead of dedicating the Carra edition to Patsy Murphy I have decided to dedicate it to my agent for his good offices in obtaining from Patsy Murphy, without undue coercion, the money that I so advantage-

ously laid out in the Nouvelle Athènes. Patsy Murphy has been a patron of literature without knowing it.

CHAP. LX.

OUTSIDE of the circle of your own life you are unconcerned with the fate of Moore Hall, my agent's ghost insisted as the train passed by Maynooth, and I answered to the ghost: that is not so, for I would prolong the life of Moore Hall beyond my life if it were possible. What is Moore Hall but one of a thousand other houses built in the eighteenth century? he replied. The Nineveh into which Jonah marched for three days before he began to preach passed away so rapidly that the shepherds who fed their flocks among the ruins could not tell Xenophon the name of the bygone city. Why then, said the ghostly voice, should you trouble about Moore Hall? nobody will live there again. It is true, I answered him; time overtakes the most enduring monuments, but men continue to build, for they are created with that intention, and every day we strive against death. Why then should it be very foolish of me to dream of Moore Hall as a hostel for parsons and curates when I am among the gone? The Irish Protestant Church is very dear to me, and Moore Hall might serve as a token of my admiration of a Protestantism that has given to Ireland all our great men and our Anglo-Irish literature. In conversation with Hugh Lane I once said: I will leave my Impressionist pictures to Moore Hall, if you will include some pictures; together we might found a museum that would attract pilgrims. But Hugh Lane, who was something of a sciolist, answered that a museum was useless unless some hundreds visited it daily. Three appreciative visitors, I said, are better than a crowd of holiday starers. At this Lane giggled, but his prejudice in favour of the starer did not relax. Hugh Lane was undoubtedly some-

thing of a sciolist. But we are not yet at the end of our imaginations. Another destiny than a clerical hostel might be devised for Moore Hall; a rich American might buy my house. Ireland is nearer America than England, and sooner or later Galway will become a Transatlantic port. A steamer plies from Galway to Cong. Cong is but a few miles away from Moore Hall, why should not some rich American take the place from me? and may this book fall into his hands and inspire him to do so.

CHAP. LXI.

THE train passes into Dublin, and I remember that if I hasten I may catch the train to Kingstown, and cross to-night. Why wait a day in Dublin? Let me hurry to my fireside in Ebury Street. And an hour later I am leaning over the taffrail watching the wake of the ship as she pierces the waveless Irish Sea.

It is the past that explains everything, I say to myself. It is in our sense of the past that we find our humanity, and there are no moments in our life so dear to us as when we lean over the taffrail and watch the waters we have passed through. The past tells us whence we have come and what we are, and it was well that I refused to allow the trees to be felled, for sitting by my fireside in Ebury Street I should hear the strokes of the axe in my imagination as plainly as I should if I were living in Moore Hall, and the ghosts of the felled trees would gather about my arm-chair in Ebury Street.

THE END